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The Figure in the Carpet

by

Mark Kanzer, M.D.

In "The Figure in the Carpet", Henry James discusses the writer's motivation in his creative work. Speaking through Hugh Vereke, a successful novelist who presumably represents himself, he inquires, "Isn't there for every writer a particular thing that most makes him apply himself?" Affirmatively, he answers, "There's an idea in my work without which I wouldn't have given a straw for the whole job": an idea which, like "an organ of life", stretches through his successive writings. "The order, the form, the texture of my books will perhaps some day constitute for the initiated a complete representation of it". Asked by the puzzled critic for a clue to this "figure in the carpet", Vereke responds: "My whole lucid effort gives the clue - every page and line and letter. The thing's as concrete there as a bird in a cage, a bait on a hook, a piece of cheese in a mousetrap. It's stuck into every volume as your foot is stuck into your shoe. It governs every line, it chooses every word, it dots every i, it places every comma".

This contention of James-Vereke would probably be supported by most psychoanalysts and many literary critics of the present time. The writer - perhaps even so versatile and universal a genius as Shakespeare - basically explores and works through variations of a single theme which attracts him and is rooted in an infantile fixation that he seeks to master repetitively in his phantasies. Not only is the content of his work testimony to the particular range and limits of his own phantasy, but his metaphors, his phraseology, in short his style, reflect in characteristic ways the same basic influences and preoccupations - as modern literary criticism shows with increasing authority (1, 2).

To be sure, the validation of surmises as to the special

"figure in the carpet" of the individual author presents problems. To be certain theoretically of the existence of the figure and to devise methodologies that point suggestively in a particular direction is quite possible, but to reach incontrovertible conclusion (even, let us say, with the opportunity to analyze the author) is still to be left with much that is speculative. Yet various elements may fit together so consistently, defying alternate explanations, that recognition can not reasonably be withheld (barring undue repression) from the emergent patterns.

Henry James himself leads us a step or two in the direction he has in mind - but leaves the ultimate solution in the form of a riddle. The author's "particular thing that most makes him apply himself" is rather readily deciphered from the story itself, especially when supplemented by the known views of James on literature. It is the pleasure of the phantasies which he enjoys during his creative work - "the joy of my soul", as Vereke puts it, and "the amount of felt life concerned in producing it", as James described it in his preface to "*The Portrait of a Lady*". Certainly this is in accord with analytic concepts; the problem is the nature of the phantasy that was the joy of this writer's soul.

With James, who held himself apart from life and derived substitute pleasures from observations and imaginative play which he was able to use constructively in creative art, his work itself became his life - as he most explicitly and repeatedly stated in his self-analytic literary criticisms. Hence his famous interchanges with H. G. Wells, who more extrovertedly saw phantasy and literature as a preparation for real action - a controversy rooted ultimately in the inherent use of the imagination as trial action in contrast to the more morbid trend which makes of it a permanent substitute for action. Writing with the "art for art's sake" arguments which were favored by the aesthetes of the eighteen nineties, James declared: "It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance"; to which Wells responded: "To you literature like painting is an end, to me literature like architecture is a means, it has a use. When you say, it is art that makes life,

makes interest, makes importance, I can only read sense into it by assuming that you are using art for every conscious human activity" (3). This the analyst would amend to read, "for every conscious and unconscious activity"; James himself says as much - that life can be conveyed only indirectly, symbolically, through an art that is admirably suited by its range and variety to convey the fullness of life. In a succession of works (as clearly as possible, for example, in "*The Real Thing*", not long before "*The Figure in the Carpet*") he strives to clarify the idea that art (for him) is more real than life itself.

The parable with which he illustrates this thesis is delineated with Jamesian subtlety in the story itself - in a figure which, as he declares with some exasperation, is perfectly obvious and spread for all to see, yet which he can safely and mournfully count upon as one that will not be grasped even by his greatest admirers. The latter are stirred, as he points out, by something that they are not quite able to fathom - he even uses the term "unconscious cerebration" (1896); and the hint is clearly given that James himself has come to realize the meaning of the appeal that passes from himself to the reader, though he does not propose to make this explicit. "It isn't for the vulgar", he intimates, but rather for "the initiated".

"*The Figure in the Carpet*" tells of a young critic with a great admiration for Vereke, whose favorable review of the novelist's latest book nevertheless does not grasp the essence of the appeal. The task of discovering the "exquisite scheme", the hidden texture of the work, as the author explains to him, is not for superficial cleverness in the analysis of style or content, or for sincere but unarticulated emotional response, but rather for a bold grip upon the very string on which "the pearls are strung" - the very passion of the author's passion, "the part of the business in which, for him, the flame of art burns most intensely". Further than this Vereke will not commit himself, and the critic - the nameless narrator of the story - is fired as he has never been fired before, is "determined to do or die" to get to the heart of

the mystery. (More technically, the analyst might make a similar comparison between intellectualization or emotional abreaction on the one hand and the search for genuine insight on the other).

Two young intellectuals become equally ardent participants in the search for the figure - Corvick, a fellow-critic and Gwendolyn, a novelist. Success evades the narrator but comes to Corvick, who is rewarded with a confirmation from the great novelist himself. The secret is then passed on to Gwendolyn when (and apparently on condition that) she marries Corvick; the latter however is killed on his honeymoon through maladroitness in the handling of a horse. The critic-narrator then besieges the widow for the secret, even to the point of considering matrimony, but makes no headway with her in either direction. It is intimated however that she is "living" the Vereke secret, which is apparently translated into a happy re-marriage that finds its basis in something more than a mutual interest in literature. Death in childbirth terminates the idyl and the narrator quizzes the husband - also a literary critic - on the secret which he assumes has been passed on by Gwendolyn. To his astonishment, he learns that the secret - on which the husband must also have "lived" - had never been communicated to him by his wife. With Vereke's death, all hope of a solution seems to have been lost to the narrator himself - and of course to the reader as well.

The question to be considered is whether the secret has not in fact been revealed in the course of the narrative itself. The basic form is that of a riddle - sphinxlike, oedipal - that is deftly handled by the author of "*The Turn of the Screw*". As with detective stories (and the oedipal theme more generally), death is one element in the combination: all three possessors of the secret meet their ends in the course of the proceedings; less obviously, the sexual element is also present and related to death. For one death occurs on a honeymoon, another in childbirth to terminate marital bliss and the third, that of Vereke, is reported in curious association with and preceding the remarriage of the woman who has gained pos-

session of his secret. Death then is the punishment for the possession of a sexual secret. There are two aspects to this secret - the one is the joy of the writer, the passion of his passion, the "organ of life" which derives from a sexual desire and its fulfillment in artistic creativity; the other is the direct physical pleasure that can be "lived upon" but does not produce art. It is a woman however who lives upon the desires and fulfillments which in James-Vereke are transformed into the "greater" reality of creative satisfaction; is this meaningless or an integral part of the figure in the carpet?

James himself indicates repeatedly that it is not a matter of indifference. When Vereke learns that the two critics are both in pursuit of his secret, but that one is sharing the search with a woman whom he intends to marry, he concedes that this may prove of material assistance; the point is not further developed. As the two male critics struggle in rivalry, the narrator envies the ability of his friend to compare notes with a woman "who had some light to mingle with his own". Cryptically, he explains, "He could say things to her that I could not say to him". When Corvick penetrates the mystery, he will communicate it only to the rival that can marry him - leaving the critic-narrator baffled and outraged by the advantages accruing to one of the opposite sex.

After the death of the bridegroom, his erstwhile competitor considers whether he, in turn, shall propose to Gwen-dolyn in order to obtain the secret. It occurs to him that perhaps the desired information can really be transmitted only after the last barrier to intimacy has been removed. "Was the figure in the carpet traceable or describable only for husbands and wives - for lovers supremely united"? He was not prepared however "to offer this price for the blessing of her knowledge. Ah, that way madness lay". Death or madness then is the price of sexual "knowledge" and ignorance a safeguard, as the fate of Corvick (and of many an Oedipus before him) had shown.

It is not difficult to see in these subtle twists and turnings a refinement of the child's traditional search for sexual

information and the guilty repression of knowledge that he has actually attained. Vereke is the father; possibly the two males and the female who pursue his secret draw sustenance from the home that Henry James shared with his brother William and his sister Alice - a home in which the father was a writer and erudition a pathway to his favor. Marriage never did become the condition under which Henry gained access to the father's secret nor, would it seem, did intimacies with women. Rather it was the passionate development and investment of habits of indirect observation and inference which he developed into an art that drew off his libidinal energies.

Yet these satisfactions were gravely threatened at the time that "The Figure in the Carpet" was written. To quote F. O. Matthiessen (3): "1893-1896 were crucial years for James. He had felt that with 'The Tragic Muse' he had reached a dead-end with the long novel, and had turned with his anxious experiment to the stage. The failure of 'Guy Domville', early in 1895, marked the end of that chapter, and only a couple of weeks later he was writing to Howells, 'I have felt, for a long time past, that I have fallen upon evil days - every sign or symbol of one's being in the least wanted, anywhere or by anyone, having so utterly failed. A new generation that I know not, and mainly prize not, has taken universal possession' ". Even the magazines would no longer accept him and his response was to increase his recourse to sublimation as in the past: "He had one answer: Produce again - produce better than ever, and all will yet be well". Certainly he was to be successful, creatively and perhaps personally, going on to a new style, new subject matter and, as we surmise, new insights that were part of a therapeutic self-analysis.

Yet during the critical phase of transition, strongly regressive trends appeared, as might be expected; doubts with respect to sublimations and a desire for more direct libidinal gratifications were reflected in such works as "The Figure in the Carpet" (1896) and even more clearly in "The Middle Years" (1895) when the conflicts were greater and the

reparative activities less advanced. Suicidal phantasies (death to the self as author) enter into the death of Vereke in the one and the novelist Dencombe in the other; (as also into the death of writers in "The Next Time", and "The Death of the Lion", other works of this period).

Nevertheless a remedy is at hand. The death of the writer is erotized and he comforts himself with the passionate adoration of the few, and particularly worth-while, readers who understand him. These include the three seekers of the truth in "The Figure" and Dr. Hugh in "The Middle Years". If the author can not be popular, he can at least establish a cult in which the fascination of his works takes precedence over all other interests for the initiated. The critic-narrator of "The Figure" relates how his curiosity about Vereke "had become the familiar torment of my days and my nights. There are doubtless people to whom torments of such an order appear hardly more natural than the contortions of disease; but I don't know why I should in this connection so much as mention them. For the few persons, at any rate, abnormal or not, with whom my anecdote is concerned, literature was a game (which) meant passion, meant life".

The readers are thus made animate, as is the novelist, in the stories themselves and their relationship explored in the spontaneous self-analytic mood which frequently characterizes a depression - particularly so, since a disposition to introspection was so highly developed in James. "The Middle Years" refers to "the pleasures of observation and the resources engendered by the trick of analyzing life". There is little doubt that these pleasures were greatly needed and abundantly used by James at this period, and that in bringing his readers to life and dying exhibitionistically before them, erotic satisfactions were made available. These satisfactions derive plainly enough from a father-son relationship, i.e., the negative oedipus complex, which was revived regressively during the critical period in which the present was no longer prized and the future offered no encouragement.

In "The Figure in the Carpet", with the licence of the writer, the youthful reader-critic is summoned into the actual presence of the aging novelist. From the beginning, he resents the competition of the ladies who seek to monopolize the idol's conversation and snatch the place at his elbow that he wishes to reserve for himself. The proprietary attitude of Lady Jane, the hostess (mother) is punished by the exposure of her superficiality and vulgarity, in contrast to the profundity and refinement of the young man. Finally the novelist is maneuvered into the bedroom of his admirer, whom he claps affectionately upon the shoulder and whose hand he holds long and repeatedly while the recipient of this attention blushes, looks yearningly after him upon his departure and regrets that they can not spend half the night together. When half the night actually elapses and in his excitement he still can find no sleep, the seeker of the mystery rises and searches through the house for some trace of the great man's writings. Lady Jane, however, to whom Vereke seems somehow to have been indispensable, did not keep any of his books in her library; presumably she too lived upon the secret.

A very similar relationship between Dencombe and Dr. Hugh in "The Middle Years" provides opportunity for even more marked physical contacts, with the younger man choosing decisively in favor of his author-hero rather than fortune and the love of women. Interestingly, the name of Hugh in the one instance refers to the author, in the other to the reader, testimony presumably to their narcissistic unity and their split respectively into the masculine creative and feminine experiencing portions of the ego.

The ultimate revelation of Vereke's secret, as the critic-narrator pictures it taking place between Corwick and Gwendolyn during their honeymoon, would bear out this sexualized version. It is regarded as a "climax" during which "the idol is unveiled" in "a private ceremony for a palpitating audience of one. For what else but that ceremony had the nuptials taken place"? In more sublimated form, the envy of James at the prerogatives and advantages of

women revealed itself at this period in that aspect of his stories which repeatedly introduced female novelists who, with far less meritorious works, won a public that was denied to their more finely perceptive male colleagues; (*Greville Fane, The Next Time, The Death of the Lion*).

Indeed, on a broader scale, the same figure may be traced from the early Jamesian "The Madonna of the Future" (1873), in which the painter is doomed to futility and death because he must idealize women rather than obscenely depict the more physical side of sex, to the "third period" Jamesian "The Story in It" (1903) in which the female writer Maud Blessingbourne refutes the vigorous and masculine opinion of Colonel Vogt that stories can develop only from the consummation of the sex act. The lady's problem, it appears, really stems from the fact that she can not reveal to the colonel her love for himself. Her stories must necessarily deal with her substitute experiences in living and loving, which contrast with the vigorous affair between the colonel and the hostess (another *Lady Jane!*), who have no need to write books.

The lovers divine Maud's secret, however, and conclude that "Her own consciousness, if they let it alone - as they of course after this mercifully must - was in the last analysis a kind of shy romance. Not a romance like their own, a thing to make the fortune of any author up to the mark - one who should have the invention or who could have the courage; but a small scared subjective satisfaction that would do her no harm and nobody else any good". "Who", James asks demurely, "would see the shadow of a story in it?"

This was indeed the story in it for Henry James, the story that it had always been and which, with Maud Blessingbourne (as with the other frustrated Jamesian heroines - the Mays, Millies, Maisies, united possibly by some key cipher as well as by their fates) achieved an image that was more real and satisfying than life, the product of a self-analysis

through literature that led to the discovery and acceptance of the figure in his own carpet.

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Two Pair of Gloves: Mark Twain and Henry James

by

Herbert Feinstein

I suppose there are symbols since critics keep finding them. If you do not mind I dislike talking about them and being questioned about them. It is hard enough to write books and stories without being asked to explain them as well. Also it deprives the explainers of work. If five or six or more good explainers can keep going why should I interfere with them? Read anything I write for the pleasure of reading it. Whatever else you find will be the measure of what you brought to the reading.

Ernest Hemingway, in an Interview
in the *Paris Review*, Spring, 1958.

Yes, the paralysis of Sir Clifford is symbolic — all art is *au fond* symbolic, conscious or unconscious . . . I did not deliberately work symbolically. But by the time the book was finished, I realized what the unconscious symbolism was.

D. H. Lawrence, in a letter, September 12, 1929.

I

INTRODUCTION*

This paper will analyze a symbol shared — the use of gloves — by two very different American writers, Mark Twain

* I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Henry Nash Smith, the Literary Editor of the Mark Twain Estate, and Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. Many of my ideas about Mark Twain — and, indeed, about American literature — received their impetus in Mr. Smith's inspired classes, especially in his Mark Twain Seminar, given at Berkeley, in spring, 1957. Professor Smith's encouragement and teaching do not, of course, make him responsible for any of my *wrong* ideas.

and Henry James. Lionel Trilling has said about these coeval authors:

To say that Henry James and Mark Twain are opposite poles of our national character would be excessive, yet it is clear that they do suggest tendencies which are very far apart, so that there is always refreshment and enlightenment in thinking of them together . . . diverse as they are, indifferent to each other as they mostly were, deeply suspicious of each other as they were whenever they became aware of each other. . . (1)

One can anticipate "refreshment and enlightenment," then, in uncovering common ground by studying the glove as phallic symbol in these two divergent writers. In Freudian fashion, my hope is to make these two novelists secret sharers, or more properly, unconscious users, of a funded "analogical matrix." (2) My plan is to explore the use of symbols in literature together with case studies of Twain and James.

The source materials are two, one for each author. Mark Twain will be studied in the pages of his first long book, *The Innocents Abroad*, published in 1869, but based, in large measure, upon earlier newspaper dispatches of 1867. (3) This episode involves the initial disembarkation on the European soil of Gibraltar of the innocents; there the "boys," those vernacular and invisible saints are "taken in" by an "angel," a "very handsome young" saleslady, in that wicked European outpost. The plot thickens when the dark "angel" sells them all defective gloves; the "boys" are given the business. Gibraltar, one recalls, presents a literary, as well as an historical trouble-spot. Gibraltar is the "stony gateway of two worlds" from whose rocks the Devil watches the homeward-bound voyage of Ivan Bunin's deceased "Gentleman from San Francisco"; and the Gibraltar slopes serve as the situs for the deflowering of James Joyce's Yeating Molly Bloom.

The James material is from his novella, *The Turn of the Screw*, published in 1898, almost thirty years after Twain's *Innocents*. Edmund Wilson has been the most outspoken proponent of the Freudian interpretation of this story. Wilson, in 1934, summed it all up in a sentence: "The theory

is, then, that the governess who is made to tell the story is a neurotic case of sex repression, and that the ghosts are not real ghosts but hallucinations of the governess.” (4) A generation of critics has rushed to disagree, though Wilson’s construction has received some lingering support. It would be pointless to set out the whole of this literary controversy, though a few random citations may signal the splendor of the quarrel.

Harry Levin — never to be found on the side of the philistines, if he can help it — in vouching for the *bona fides* of James’ ghosts, has contributed this complicated caveat:

Isolating text from context in the name of “close reading,” we can easily be led astray. So sensible a critic as Edmund Wilson has argued that Henry James’ *Turn of the Screw* should be read as a psychological projection of its governess’ frustrations. Subsequently it has been shown by Professor Robert L. Wolff — a professional historian on a Jamesian holiday — that the manifest content of the alleged fantasy came from a sentimental illustration in a Christmas annual to which James had also contributed. (5)

Wilson’s reading in his essay, “The Ambiguity of Henry James,” has been further denigrated and doubted by at least Quentin Anderson, R. P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, Robert Heilman, Katherine Anne Porter, Philip Rahv, John Raleigh, Saul Rosenzweig, Allen Tate, Mark Van Doren, and Austin Warren. (6) Both the stage and television versions of *Turn of the Screw*, as well as Benjamin Britten’s opera, have shown the audience, and the governess (Beatrice Straight on the New York stage, Ingrid Bergman on national television in 1959), the shades, in the flesh, of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. No one, however, has claimed that no ambiguity exists in James’ story. Against such strong countervailing authority only an uncautious soul would fail to register a doubt to the opinion of Wilson; nevertheless, this paper abides, more or less, with Wilson’s losing, minority position. My belief is that James’ fictional governess, more than Henry James, is the one who believed in ghosts. I say this despite the fact I must reckon with James’ own statement in his notebooks that he had in-

tended to write a ghost story. (7) Perhaps, his governess has fooled Henry James too.

However, I stress that the conviction that only the repressed girl sees non-existent ghosts is not essential to this study of the symbolic use of gloves by James in *Turn of the Screw*. James *meant* the gloves, in any event, to be real; and whether the governess *does* see the embodied, ghostly villain beyond the window may be beside the point. The Jamesian text that I'll scrutinize is the second of four "apparitions"—James uses the word "apparition" throughout—of that diabolical and deceased valet, Peter Quint. The girl, of a Sunday, goes into a darkened parlor looking for her mended gloves, but the distraught governess finds instead the highly sexualized Peter contemplating her through the "looking" glass. (8)

Though Twain's "boys" may not pretend to be gentlemen, James' governess does purport to be a lady. The difference in sex provides another reason for the choice of these texts: my thesis is that the gloves symbolize the phallus in both the male and female unconscious mind.

The doubting Thomas within us cautions—"a glove is a glove is a glove: and always was." So it is. "But," responds the voice of imagination, "the glove may signify other things too." As skeptical a Court as Mr. Justice Frankfurter concurs: "Symbolism is inescapable. Even the most sophisticated live by symbols." (9) The glove may remain itself all the while it represents other things. If one seeks unilateral, monolithic truths he had better look elsewhere than in literature. But, this paper does not propose any one to one simple-minded correspondence that glove *need* equal phallus. The glove *may* symbolize many things. Another essay could possibly be written about the glove as receptacle, or female symbol.

Observe: when Balzac's translator, at the end of *Père Goriot*, has the upwards mobile Rastignac "throw down the glove to Society," this becomes an "*acte du défi*," or challenge—not sexuality. (10) Distortion alone would urge simple, face value meaning: that Balzac is having his hero re-

move his hand's outer garment, then cast it on the floor in a purposeful sort of way.

The same writer may use the same word in different places to mean different things, one time literal, another place symbolic. A formulation by Mr. Justice Holmes may be useful here. Holmes said, "A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged, it is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used." (11)

For instance, consider the use of the word "glove" in the poetry of the great American bard, Walt Whitman. Whitman uses "glove" in two places in his *Leaves of Grass*, each time quite differently. (12) In "The Song of the Open Road" gloves form part of a material check list or catalogue: "Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and artificial flowers." (13:38) However, in "To Think of Time" it may be claimed the glove acquires a more sexually symbolic meaning: "Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves, straps, wetweather clothes, whip carefully chosen." (4:17) This line, at any rate, is chock-full of images of erect extension, and the "whip" at the end imparts a sinister, sadistic note.

We all remember another overtly aggressive glove in childhood's limerick about the gladiator who tired of the mean lady who endlessly encouraged the gladiator to try out his prowess in the arena — unto hero's near death. Whereupon, quite fed up, "He threw the glove/ But not with love/ Back into the lady's face." This glove, most will agree, is, if anything, anti-phallic and anti-sexual.

To be sure, it is hard to span the abyss between symbol and acceptable meaning. One man's meat may become another man's poison — or still a third's cool drink of water. Even to imagine that symbols arrive with similar impact and meaning in the minds of different men, what of the preliminary difficulty of communication between the writer and his own symbol? Here, one meets the problems of dividing the conscious from the unconscious mind and of sep-

arating out the premeditated, the accidental, and the incidental.

Suppose an author invokes a symbol, say, as Melville, at least some of the time, employs his occult and inscrutable whale, *Moby Dick*. Does Melville himself intend the whale to be what Melville *thinks* he does? Censorship may intervene. Outwardly, Melville may have worked to write *exactly* what he meant, but inwardly, like the rest of us, he struggled with the constant intra-psychical and internecine warfares of his unconscious mind. But it is silly to suggest that a writer means the opposite of what he says; nor is there some easy "three-fifths compromise," or any other easy solution. The white of the writer's conscious intent is always clouded by the yolk of his unconscious meaning, and the reader is served up the omelet.

Only a fool or a fanatic — at times one and the same — might seek to construct any glib one-to-one relationship, or equation, between the glove and the phallus. An analogy: A rose, according to its hue, may signify many things: purity, sexual passion, even the thorns which attend it. William Blake's "sick rose" may harbor disease.* To those politically oriented, the rose may summon up mid-fifteenth century English dynastic wars. Juliet asks "What's in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet." And Gertrude Stein, no literalist she, maintains that a rose is, after all, only a rose.

To return to Melville's elusive whale: *Moby Dick*, after all is said and symbolized, remains the object of chase in a whale of a fish story; only in the murkier world of metaphor may one say the whale pursues Ahab! As every ichthyologist — besides Melville — knows, a whale is no more fish than it is fowl: it is a mammal. *Moby Dick* endures as a mystery to be relentlessly chased by critics. Thus, in the af-

*O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

fair of the gloves — perhaps something aggressive to induce a duel, occasionally something phallic to denote the sexual, but *always* something protective to cover the hands.

Cleanth Brooks, in discussing "The Heresy of Paraphrase"—and Brooks includes over-ingenuous symbol-searching under "heresy"—cites the views of W. M. Urban in *Language and Reality* on the possible broadening value of analyzing symbols:

[Urban] says that if we expand the symbol, "we lose the 'sense' or value of the symbol *as symbol*. The solution . . . seems to . . . lie in an adequate theory of interpretation of the symbol. It does not consist in substituting *literal* for symbol sentences, in other words substituting 'blunt' truth for symbolic truth, but rather in deepening and enriching the meaning of the symbol." (13)

This essay does not plumb, through analysis of literary materials, the unconscious mind of either Twain or James, or pass final judgments upon the works discussed. To suggest is not to insist. One happy, useful thing about Freudian mythology is its universality: a myth can be imbibed by men at different times and places. An imaginary Greek king, conceived by Sophocles, might suffer from the first recorded Oedipus complex, indeed give it its name, though the sufferer never heard of psychoanalysis; and, if we are to believe Sophocles' other *dramatis personae*, Oedipus would not have believed a word of it.

One harder stumbling block may be that we must use the created materials of James and Twain as if their characters were flesh and blood — or James' ghostly — men and women. We are grappling with the stuffs of fiction, for Twain's *Innocents*, putatively based upon exotic travels, contains as much fiction as fact. (14) We may gain an advantage, for the more fictive the work, the more unguarded the writer may be about revealing himself.

Twain was, to be sure, the more unguarded, and was much less self-conscious a writer than pondering Henry James. Whenever I read any depth analysis of Twain's work, say by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks or Dr. William Barrett, I imagine

Mark Twain is smiling in his analyst's face. (15) James was, of course, much closer than Twain to direct interest in the workings of the unconscious mind: I think James was, consequently, more self-protective than was Twain. But even Henry James can be found out, to reveal — in his phrase — "The Figure in the Carpet." The key to any writer, as Ernest Jones has demonstrated in his masterpiece on Shakespeare, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, lies ultimately in what the writer *writes*. (16)

I do not establish any equation, or suggest an equally foolish typology of turning things inside out; but only too literal a reader would deny the writer of fiction deals with what, in one important way or another, is on the writer's unconscious mind.

Dr. Jones justifies his analysis of Hamlet as a living man; and he explains why he uses the imagined Hamlet to achieve insight into the historical Shakespeare:

. . . an artist does not convey all he wishes to solely in matter-of-fact literalness; if he left nothing to our imagination he would fail to stir it. Our response to his creative effort always implies a reading between the lines on our part, an extension of what he has actually written — provided always that our imagination is in tune with his and never departs from it. A final proviso! An artist has an unconscious mind as well as a conscious one, and his imagination springs at least as fully from the former as from the latter.

For these reasons I propose to pretend that Hamlet was a living person — one might parenthetically add that to most of us he is more so than many a player on the stage of life — and inquire what measure of man such a person must have been to feel and act in certain situations in the way Shakespeare tells us he did. So far shall I be from forgetting that he was a figment of Shakespeare's mind that I shall then go on to consider the relation of this particular imaginative creation to the personality of Shakespeare himself. (17)

I shan't delve into the psyche of either Twain or James, but I do maintain that through the analysis of their work meaningful insight can be gained into Twain and James. *The Innocents Abroad* and *The Turn of the Screw* were created by two masterful writers; both held deep commitments

to subject matter, as well as to language. Since this essay confines itself to the text of two works, any depth analysis will have to be performed by the reader. The reader should accept for the time the hypothesis that the glove may connote the multi-phallic. The hopeful reward is further enlightenment about the work of two men about whom we can never learn enough. After regretting Edmund Wilsons' Freudian dip into James' *Turn of the Screw*, Harry Levin talks about the value of searching out symbols. "'In a symbol,' wrote Thomas Carlyle in his handbook for symbolists, *Sartor Resartus*, 'there is both concealment and revelation.' But," Professor Levin goes on, "if everything were revealed, then nothing would be symbolized; and if everything were concealed, then too, nothing would be symbolized. Thus a symbol is a sort of excluded middle between what we know and what we do not know—or better, as Carlyle put it, a meeting point between the finite and the infinite.'" (18) Susanne Langer has also contributed the notion of juncture in her statement, "Symbolization is both an end and an instrument." (19) One more citation: Kenneth Burke suggests that, once conceived, the symbol acquires a life of its own. Mr. Burke writes: "When the poet has converted his pattern of experience into a Symbolic equivalent, the Symbol becomes a guiding principle in itself." (20)

One may venture, then, that a symbol offers common ground between Twain and James as well as a metaphorical meeting place within the work of the writers. The idea should not cause surprise when we find that Webster lists as an obsolete meaning of the transitive verb *to symbolize*: "to combine or unite; to cause to assimilate." A rare, though still permissible, use of "symbolize," in its intransitive sense, remains "to be alike in qualities, properties, principles, etc.; to harmonize, agree; concur; to become united." (21)

To ask the reader to extend short-term credibility while I state my case is to request along with Coleridge, in his celebrated phrase, "that willing suspension of disbelief" so necessary for the understanding and enjoyment of literature.

A final allusion before we scrutinize the text of Twain's

Innocents. "Art," defines Henry James in "The Story in It," "Art is our flounderings shown." This investigator seeks to flounder through deep waters in the art of Mark Twain and Henry James, and to fathom the hidden story in their work. Symbolically, flounder may be just another species of fish. As did Ahab's crew, we sail on a symbolic fishing expedition.

II

MARK TWAIN'S "INNOCENTS" AT GIBRALTAR

The Innocents Abroad, Volume I, Chapter VII, sets ashore for the first time, Twain's Innocents, the "boys," that vernacular community of invisible saints, on the mainland of Europe. The *Quaker City* ties up at Gibraltar, and its passengers, pious Pilgrims and "boys" alike, disembark.

"Every now and then," Twain nostalgically reminisces, "my glove purchase in Gibraltar intrudes itself upon me." (I:60) (22) An interesting recollection, since the episode of the gloves never appeared in the underlying newsletters of the voyage which Twain wrote for the *Alta California* and some other journals. Twain began an unfinished play about the *Quaker City* voyage soon after his return to the United States, but no mention of the Gibraltar glove incident exists in this fragment: in fact, in the drama, the vessel never even reach Gibraltar. (23)

An *Ur-text* for the incident does, however, exist in the notebooks which Twain kept of the *Quaker City* excursion: "Buying gloves of the seductive Spanish wench in the main street who said I know how to put a glove on, and few did — (when I was tearing the worthless thing to pieces with my awkwardness) and taking this fearful sarcasm for a compliment. I paid the price (50 cents) for a torn pair of Spanish kid gloves." (24) Twain was to censor "seductive" to "handsome"; but he kept the payment for services rendered.

A few lines later in his notebook, Twain briefly captions: "Many beautiful English and Spanish girls" (25) Twain built up these notebook entries into material for his book. *The Innocents* evidences Twain's development from journalism to fiction, for Twain entered the house of fiction through

the back door of journalism. In the "gloves" episode, how much is underlying fact and how much Twain's imagination can, of course, never be known.*

A few of the "boys," — Dan, the ship's surgeon, and the "I" of the narrative (*i.e.*, Mark Twain) — have been in the great square "contemplating English and Spanish female loveliness and fashion" (I:60); some of the *Quaker City's* more sanctimonious Pilgrims" . . . the General, the Judge, the Commodore, the Colonel, and the Commissioner of the United States of America to Europe, Asia, and Africa"—counsel them" . . . to go over to the little variety store . . . and buy some kid gloves. They said they were elegant, and very moderate in price. It seemed a stylish thing to go to the theatre in kid gloves, and we acted upon the hint. A very handsome young lady in the store offered me a pair of blue gloves. I did not want blue, but she said they would look very pretty on a hand like mine." (1:60,61)

Twain is "flattered." "The remark" touches him "tenderly." Doubtless, he is pleased since the girl induces him to glance "furtively" at his "hand, and somehow it did seem rather a comely member." The "member" becomes involved with deeper, subliminal feelings, for Twain blushes: "I tried a glove on my left, and blushed a little." However, reality and anxiety obtrude: Twain at once realizes the item is too small, that the glove will *never* fit. He feels "gratified" when the saleslady compliments him: "'Oh, it is just right!' — yet I knew it was no such thing."

Twain receives further "gratification" when the lady continues to hoodwink him: "'Ah, I see *you* are accustomed to wearing kid gloves — but some gentlemen are *so* awkward about putting them on.' "

After several aborted attempts by Twain to force his hand into the garment, the glove is in shreds. "She kept up her compliments, and I kept up my determination to deserve them or die." Moving deep into the language of seduc-

* I read *The Innocents Abroad* as Mark Twain's own *Bildungsroman*, but that seems beside the point here.

tion, the saleslady speaks candidly: " 'Ah, you have had experience.' " (I:62)

To the image of the rent and tattered glove Twain adds the observation that he had become "hot, vexed, confused, but still happy," and later he says, "It *was* warm. It was the warmest place I ever was in." Three brief consecutive paragraphs in the text may amplify matters:

I was too much flattered to make an exposure, and throw the merchandise on the angel's hands. I was hot, vexed, confused, but still happy; but I hated the other boys for taking such an absorbing interest in the proceedings. I wished they were in Jericho. I felt exquisitely mean when I said cheerfully:

"This one does very well; it fits elegantly. I like a glove that fits. No, never mind, ma'am, never mind; I'll put the other on in the street. It is warm here."

It *was* warm. It was the warmest place I ever was in. I paid the bill, and as I passed out with a fascinating bow, I thought I detected a light in the woman's eye that was gently ironical; and when I looked back from the street, and she was laughing all to herself about something or other, I said to myself, with withering sarcasm, "Oh, certainly; *you* know how to put on kid gloves, don't you?—a self-complacent ass, ready to be flattered out of your senses by every petticoat that chooses to take the trouble to do it!" (I:62)

On the street, the "boys" assemble: it comes out that the wordly-wise, outcast "boys," paradoxically, have been "taken in," "rooked," "bamboozled" by the charming Gibraltar angel. Twain persuades the "boys" to keep their shared disgrace a community secret, away from the "old gossips," the Pilgrims of the *Quaker City*. Twain closes the episode with this brief paragraph.

They let me alone then, for the time being. We always let each other alone in time to prevent ill feeling from spoiling a joke. But they had bought gloves, too, as I did. We threw all the purchases away together this morning. They were coarse, unsubstantial, freckled all over with broad yellow splotches, and could neither stand wear nor public exhibition. We had entertained an angel unawares, but we did not take her in. She did that for us. (I:63)

Explication of text in this summary paragraph may serve

both to relate style to subject, and to ram home the sexual symbolism of the gloves in which the knowing "boys" are initiated into experience.

It has been suggested for Hemingway that his style is his subject matter, and, that the barren, flat diction of, say, *The Sun Also Rises* reflects the desert within Lady Brett, Jake Barnes, and the rest of those impoverished "chaps." (26) A case can be made out for a similar construction of Twain's last quoted paragraph. There are seven short sentences: the longest contains nineteen words, the shortest five words. Three sentences contain nine words apiece, while the total of eighty words divided by seven gives an average of eleven words per sentence. There are only two polysyllables of more than three: "exhibition" and "unsubstantial." "Unsubstantial," with four syllables, contains thirteen letters and is the longest word in this passage. Perhaps "unsubstantial" provides the clue to the entire passage, for this is a jejune, arid, flat word for a book about exotic travels. The politics of isolation permeate this passage; note, for example, the following words: "alone," "ill feeling," "spoiling," "threw away," "unsubstantial," and, of course, "unawares."

The Innocents are altogether deracinated abroad, and their sense of security is quite at sea. Countless future guides such as Ferguson, and other shopkeepers such as the black Gibraltar angel, will seduce and gyp them. As cases in point: later on in Paris (I:115), Twain uses the phrase "blessed innocence" to describe that unaware vernacular community, the "boys," who are too naive to guess that Ferguson *français* is being paid a percentage on sales by crooked shopkeepers, including *boutiquières de gants*. Again, in Venice (I:246-248) the "boys" almost get their collective throat cut by a barber in a similar communal frolic. There are many close shaves endured by the innocent, errant "boys."

At Gibraltar, for the first time in Europe, the "boys" have been, in the word of the American language—"taken." "Take in," a variation of "take," one of the ten primary English verbs, is the term Twain uses. "To take in" in the sense of "swindle," says H. L. Mencken, has been

good American usage since at least 1781 when John Witherspoon attacked the corruption of "take". (27) The last two sentences sum up the "taking in" of the four preceding pages. Twain underscores the lesson with his brief, concluding staccato sentence of five bare monosyllables: "She did *that* for us." (Emphasis supplied.)

In this particular book by Mark Twain, the diction is oddly grammatical. Note, for instance, the elegant balance of the construction: "But they bought gloves too, as I did." One is again reminded of the simple dramatic understatement of Hemingway's prose. A similar sentence can be found in Howard Baker's Hemingwayesque novel of 1931, *Orange Valley*, which deals with a group of dessicated "chaps" out West. One entire paragraph in *Orange Valley* describes life in the citrus circuit: "Alma ate her grapefruit, as did Eddie." (28)

In the main, Twain writes in simple declarative sentences, though this paragraph has one compound and one complex sentence too. Sentence structure, then, is consonant with the dry plainness in the irony of the passage.

Further, one notes even in this brief ironical passage two elements of Twain's humor. The first is the sense Twain creates of the outsider (*cf.* the boy Huckleberry Finn) and the second is Twain's economy of sympathy.

In talking about some of Twain's anecdotes of the Far West, Howard Mumford Jones has characterized this sense of the outsider, as only those who are "taken in" can be. Mr. Jones says: "Is not the point of the American yarns to trick the hearer, to make him feel that he does not understand the community, to make him feel not only like a fool but also like an outsider? Such, at any rate, seems to me to be the governing principle of anecdotes like these, in which the frontier protects itself against condescension and patronage." (29)

Surely there is little in the episode of the gloves in Gibraltar which removes one very far from the self-conscious wit of Calaveras County, California, where Jim Smiley, that local yokel, is "taken in" by a visiting dude. Twain, the In-

nocent in Gibraltar, may—as in Ivan Bunin's enigmatic fable—be just another gentleman from San Francisco. San Francisco, by the way, is the *situs* to which Twain returns at the end of his travels and where the author is—in his phrase—"at home." (II:405)

Another stylistic aspect of this passage is its economy of sympathy, its brevity and curtness—something unusual in the often discursive Twain. Sigmund Freud, a great admirer of Mark Twain, and an investigator of wit and humor in Twain's work, noted: "Economy of sympathy is one of the most frequent sources of humoristic pleasure. Mark Twain's humor usually follows this mechanism." (30) Further, Freud observed that Twain will often elaborate upon a preposterous incident, as he does with that of the gloves, building it up and up, only to plunge in chilling descent to a whimper of flat diction. This is surely true of the end of the gloves as well as other episodes in the *Innocents*.*

If, as Flaubert claims, style is the only morality, and direct, distilled prose is the way to tell the sad story of his doomed daughter of French provincial, Emma Bovary, then Twain appropriately states the Jamesian morality of this passage—the robbing of the American Innocent by the European of experience—in language which is appropriately flat. The swindle by the saleslady in Gibraltar is heavy with sinister, immoral implications: for it involves a large measure of acquiescent self-deception on the part of the Americans

* Compare, in *Huckleberry Finn*, where Huck and Aunt Sally discuss Huck's tardiness:

.... "Now I struck an idea, and fetched it out:

[Huck] " 'It warn't the grounding—that didn't keep us back but a little. We blowed out a cylinder-head.'

[Aunt Sally] " 'Good gracious! Anybody hurt?'

[Huck] " 'No'm. Killed a nigger.'

[Aunt Sally] " 'Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt'"

As another example, one might consider Huck's account of the macabre, though hilarious, late Emmeline Grangerford. Huck sums up: "But I reckoned that with her disposition she was having a better time in the graveyard." (31)

abroad, in order to save their group face. This is the sort of seductive "brainwash" Henry James has institutionalized in *his* fiction — say, the cultural conversion which the Countess de Vionnet effects upon that Innocent from Massachusetts, Lambert Strether, in *The Ambassadors*; or to cite an attempt that fails — the self-aggrandizement the expatriated Gilbert Osmond and Mme. Merle try — without final success — on Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*.

Still, the Innocents have been taken in by an "angel." Angels are notoriously sexless: angelology is the dismal science. In Anatole France, when an angel is asked to sit down by a mortal, the angel apologizes, "*Je n'ai pas de quoi.*" Twain's lady has plenty "*de quoi.*" Moreover, she's no angel, and, it seems, no lady either: therein lies the paradox. But, the "boys" have been "entertained" by her, so the loss is not net, it may be a long term gain. They have known and been taken into evil: — "taken for a ride."

Finally, a few of the acquisitive connotations of "taking": the seizure of property under eminent domain, as well as the devolution of property under a will; in pugilist's talk to be able to "take" someone means to be able to beat him up. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's last finished novel, an innocent American, the movie star, Rosemary Hoyt, tenderly implores Dr. Dick Diver in the Parisian night: "Take me." Diver parries with the gentlemanly question: "Take you where?" (32)* In a less sexual, but also pleasurable sense, "to take in a show" in American speech means to attend, observe, and presumably to enjoy.

True, in the end, Twain's gloves are in dissolution: all ten phalli need to be discarded. The wages of sexual anxiety is the fantasy of castration. No matter, the Innocents have survived, and Twain assures us they are not yet bereft

* N.B. In Henry James' *The Ambassadors*, Maria Gostrey asks Lambert Strether to *take* her.

[Maria] " 'Yes, I may break down. But will you take me?'

"He had hesitated, and she waited. 'Take you—?'

[Maria] " 'For as long as I can bear it.' "

Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (New York, 1903), p. 361.

of their good humor. For the first time they have been initiated into European intrigue. Once more, *felix culpa*: innocence lost becomes experience gained. After this incident, the *Quaker City* quits Europe for a while and sets sail for the lurid city of Tangier on the Dark Continent. (I:63)

Further casual references to gloves in Volume II of the *Innocents* betoken no phalli. Twain comments, by way of analogy, upon the non-practicability of gloves in the Holy Land desert: "I may as well mention here that on our whole trip we saw no Bedouins, and had no more use for an Arab guard than we could have had for patent-leather boots and white kid gloves." (II:338) Further, in the hortatory valedictory letter to the New York *Herald* which winds up his travel reminiscences, Twain has this to say about the ineptitude of the Innocents in wielding foreign languages: "One of our passengers said to a shopkeeper, in reference to a proposed return to buy a pair of gloves, '*Allong restay trankeel — maybe ve coom Moonday*'; and would you believe it, that shopkeeper, a born Frenchman, had to ask what it was that had been said." (II:402) Cynically, Twain concludes: "Sometimes it seems to me, somehow, that there must be a difference between Parisian French and *Quaker City* French." (II:402) No sexual symbolism can be claimed for either of these later passages.

The final irony is that the guilty party—the culprit morally responsible—in the case of the gloves is not the saleslady who had warranted the "boys" nothing. Her defense, one recognized at law, is *caveat emptor*. But place the incident in its frame. It is ". . . the General, the Judge, the Commodore, the Colonel, and the Commissioner of the United States of America to Europe, Asia and Africa," who have "registered their several titles" in Gibraltar and have lured the "boys" into the saleswoman's tender trap. (I:61) The "respectable" Pilgrims, the vested interests, the Nay-Saying, tyrannical "they" who dominate community opinion, those hypocrites who run the official culture are rarely, in Mark Twain's work, what their masks make them out to be.

Not for the first time—or the last—in the *Innocents*, respectability cloaks hypocrisy.

III

HENRY JAMES' GOVERNESS AT BLY

The single paragraph in *The Turn of the Screw* which recounts the second appearance of the dead, though devilishly sexual, Peter Quint to the narrating governess confirms, in a nutshell, Edmund Wilson's thesis that James' governess is suffering from hallucinations which diagnose her as a case of sexual repression. One might make as offer of proof the entire four hundred fifty-four words:

There was a Sunday—to get on—when it rained with such force and for so many hours that there could be no procession to church; in consequence of which, as the day declined, I had arranged with Mrs. Grose that, should the evening show improvement, we would attend together the late service. The rain happily stopped, and I prepared for our walk, which, through the park and by the good road to the village, would be a matter of twenty minutes. Coming downstairs to meet my colleague in the hall, I remembered a pair of gloves that had required three stitches and that had received them—with a publicity perhaps not edifying—while I sat with the children at their tea, served on Sundays, by exception, in that cold, clean temple of mahogany and brass, the “grown-up” dining-room. The gloves had been dropped there, and I turned in to recover them. The day was grey enough, but the afternoon light still lingered, and it enabled me, on crossing the threshold, not only to recognize, on a chair near the wide window, then closed, the articles I wanted, but to become aware of a person on the other side of the window and looking straight in. One step into the room had sufficed; my vision was instantaneous; it was all there. The person looking straight in was the person who had already appeared to me. He appeared thus again with I won't say greater distinctness, for that was impossible, but with a nearness that represented a forward stride in our intercourse and made me, as I met him, catch my breath and turn cold. He was the same—he was the same, and seen, this time, as he had been before, from the waist up, the window, though the dining-room was on the ground-floor, not going down to the terrace on which he stood. His face was

close to the glass, yet the effect of this better view was, strangely, only to show me how intense the former had been. He remained but a few seconds—long enough to convince me he also saw and recognized; but it was as if I had been looking for him for years and had known him always. Something, however, happened this time that had not happened before; his stare into my face through the glass and across the room, was as deep and hard as then, but it quitted me for a moment during which I could still watch it, see it fix successively several other things. On the spot there came to me the added shock of a certitude that it was not for me he had come there. He had come for someone else. (462-463) (33)

Style by statistical count may put one in a better position to see James' art. The paragraph contains fourteen sentences, *i.e.* four hundred and fifty-four words. Indeed, four of the sentences are separated by semi-colons (the first, sixth, eleventh, and twelfth). Sentence six—a sparse one of fifteen words—is twice split into sections by two semi-colons, which yield three simple declarative fragments. James' use of long, convoluted sentences and paragraphs bears witness to complexity. Here we find a large correspondence between style and subject, between the adjectival and the substantive: technique becomes consonant with achievement. (34)

Simple arithmetic shows that there are 32.4 words per sentence, more than three times the average sentence length than in the sample paragraph which has been analyzed from Twain's *Innocents*. James employs four sentences which contain fifty words or more (the first has fifty-three, the third fifty-seven, the fifth fifty-four, and the twelfth fifty). Of these four long sentences two (the first and the twelfth) are divided by semi-colons. One sentence contains between forty and fifty words, two between thirty and forty, three between twenty and thirty, and three between ten and twenty. There is but a single sentence with fewer than ten words: the last has six words. In a way, close to the example from the *Innocents*, James ends his paragraph with six staccato, bare, heart-rending words: "He had come for someone else."

However, James breaks his long sentences by generous use of internal punctuation. He employs five semi-colons,

six hyphens, and forty-three commas. Under scrutiny, the diction of James seems simple. The paragraph has just two hyphenated words; both are plain enough—"‘grown-up’" (which James places within quotation marks) and "‘dining-room’" (this latter word appears twice). Nor does excessive word-length offer difficulties: there are only four polysyllables of more than three, less than one per cent of the diction in the selection. These "big" words are plain too: "‘publicity,’" "‘edifying,’" "‘instantaneous,’" and "‘successively.’" Not only does James use very few long words, but he mainly writes in words that are quite short. The average number of letters per word is barely over four: to eliminate brief articles and prepositions of one or two letters apiece, the average length is raised to four and a half letters a word. If one senses complexity and abstruseness in James—"‘ambiguity,’" is what Edmund Wilson calls it—one will have to seek it in James' meaning and not in his word length or in his diction.*

Before seeking the sense of the matter through analysis of symbols, *viz.*, the gloves, I repeat Harry Levin's caveat about overly close reading. Levin's warning is all the more germane since it was issued in reference to James' *Turn of the Screw*, although not specifically in reference to the immediate paragraph. Levin said, "Isolating text from context in the name of 'close reading,' we can easily be led astray." (36)

The relevant issue is: why was the governess waylaid, or deflected, from her original church-going goal to pursue her gloves? The function of religion as an opiate of the repressed has been studied by Freud and other investigators.

* Jacques Barzun has made this point about James. He writes: "... there is a superstition that the novels of Henry James are written in a 'difficult style.' Yet if you examine them, you will find that the words and sentences—in *The Ambassadors*, for example—are in themselves quite usual." Dean Barzun continues: "But the feelings they convey are unusual and subtle, and require attention. At the same time they also compel it, which is all that an artist takes pains for in writing." (35)

Let us place, then, this second apparition in the context of the story, among the quadruple faces of Peter Quint: the governess sees Peter Quint four times.

The governess first saw the vision of Quint "in [the] clear twilight" (457) of the country estate, Bly, appropriately enough "at the very top of a tower." (456) She had been fantasizing about her handsome employer from London, the uncle to her two charges. The country girl has fallen in love with the — it is strongly implied — citified bounder, but the uncle has enjoined her from all chance of contact with him. Instead, she sees the top part of *Peter* Quint "who looked at me over the battlements." (457) I need not labor the significance of a man atop a tower.

When the girl sees Peter again it is through the window-glass, somewhat closer, but still not close enough for her pleasure. (462) The vision strides steadily nearer in his next two appearances. (491, 559) The girl's candle flickers out spookily when, for the third time, she sees Quint — now on the stairs. She recalls the tower: "The apparition had reached the landing halfway up and was therefore on the spot nearest the window, where at sight of me, it stopped short and fixed me exactly as it has fixed me from the tower and from the garden." (491-492) The fourth and last time, Quint is again seen safely beyond that shut window, like Alice *not* quite back from Wonderland. Quint is "real" enough by the end of the story for the governess to frighten little Miles to death by getting Miles to "see" the ghost of the sexual valet. (559, 560)

To return to the governess still seeking those forgotten, guilty gloves, which, we recall, had been repaired "with a publicity perhaps not edifying." (462) Freud, no less than Milton, has written a good deal about the importance of the item lost: it should be noted that a memory lapse, like a symbol, or a word, or a dream, must always be individually analyzed: no two repressed memories are alike. As in the case of Mr. Justice Holmes' "living" word, a lapse of memory can mean different things to different men, even different

things in the same man at different times: but the lapse always does signify *something* (37)

There is significance in the fact the gloves had been "dropped" earlier but presently "remembered." Perhaps the girl is remembering to keep a date on some "unfinished business." She says: "The day was grey enough, but the afternoon light still lingered." Nevertheless, the light is good enough for the girl to see — in her word — the "vision" of Quint. Suddenly, she becomes aware of an alien presence, a man safely enough shut off by glass but still "looking straight in." Though he is no more distinct to the governess than at the first meeting, "for that was impossible," now he is present "with a nearness that represented a forward stride in our intercourse." The emotional impact of her "intercourse" with the "vision" is underscored, when the governess confesses this, "made me as I met him, catch my breath [!] and turn cold." "Turn" may mean "transform." At any rate, "turn" is a key word, a word of "symbolic action" — to use Kenneth Burke's phrase — in any story entitled *The Turn of the Screw*.

As, at their first brief encounter, the man's genitals are safely concealed, for *Peter* is viewed "from the waist up." This second appearance serves "only to show how intense the former had been." The girl is convinced this time the apparition recognizes her; and she confides "it was as if I had been looking at him for years and had known him always." (Emphasis supplied.) The sexual connotation grows stronger when the girl continues, "his stare into my face . . . was . . . deep and hard." However, the girl immediately feels a sense of guilty loss, even frustration — she uses the word "shock." She becomes disappointed and certain "that it was not for me he had come there. He had come for someone else."

Both church and gloves now forgotten, the girl immediately races outside to catch the elusive devil. In an "instant" she reaches the outside of the window, but "my visitor had vanished." (463) Instead, the girl is greeted with the same shock of recognition from the inside of the house

she herself had just bestowed upon the ghostly intruder; Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, who has stepped into the parlor in search of the girl, is surprised to see her on the outside of the window.

One might dwell on various sexual connotations in the words and phrases of the paragraph. To cite some orthodoxy Freudian glosses: rain has been taken to symbolize birth; coming downstairs may mean coition; a glove may signify the desire to cloak nudity, or five phalli; but the interior of the glove may signify just the opposite.

Three is not only a number magic for Christianity, it also suggests male genitals; a temple may be said to symbolize the male (though the interior of the temple or church again may connote quite the reverse); threshold may mark the entrance to the female sexual organs, and the wide closed window suggests virginity; finally, a procession may act as a symbol for the sexual act. To the skeptic — choose any four out of eight! It is the *Gestalt*, the "analogical matrix," which counts. Text as well as context must win the psychological case or lose it. Add the reminder that this quotation does not represent a paragraph which is by any means unique in *Turn of the Screw*. Symbology infuses James' story; similar diction repeats throughout the novella.

Ultimately, the governess gets little Miles just where she wants him, but let the girl speak for herself: "We continued silent while the maid was with us — as silent, it whimsically occurred to me, as some young couple who, on their wedding-journey, at the inn, feel shy in the presence of the waiter." (550) Soon, the two are at last alone for "intercourse"; though when the boy strives to elude her grasp, she feels a stab of pity for the "small helpless creature who had been for me a revelation of the possibilities of beautiful intercourse." (553) The governess' "whimsy" may be questioned — unless it is her defense against guilt and sexual anxiety.

Now, James was a conscious, careful craftsman, as his vast treasure-trove of essays on writing, his notebooks, and his letters show. With his enormous gift and range in lan-

guage, for James repeatedly to make offbeat use of the noun "intercourse," or the past participle "known" seems probative. Despite James' statement he *meant* to write a ghost story in *Turn of the Screw*, one need not become enmeshed in the impossible task of sorting out James' conscious from his unconscious mind to imagine what the language does signify. In the 1948 postscript to his 1934 interpretation of the "ambiguity" of *Turn of the Screw*, when faced with James' recently published avowal of the *bona fides* of the two ghosts, Edmund Wilson concluded, . . . not merely is the governess . . . self-deceived, but . . . James is self-deceived about her." (38) That is, even with Henry James as witness against him, Wilson stuck to his critical guns.

However, to accept the sexual possibilities of this passage, one need only realize the girl enters the parlor in search of her gloves, but sees instead the dead Quint — whether real or imagined appears to me beside the point. Quint is the man who has committed forbidden sexual enormities with her predecessor on the job, Miss Jessel, the former governess "dishonoured and tragic" (518) and "infamous" (480), who, as Mrs. Grose tell us, "'Poor woman — she paid for it.'" (481) Indeed, Miss Jessel raises some ghostly possibilities of her own. At any rate, James strongly implies the debased Miss Jessel had to quit Bly under the scandal of pregnancy, and that she later died in the comeuppance of childbirth — the aftermath of an adult sexual relationship. Our governess remains on safer, if less satisfied, ground. The issue of her own fantasied "beautiful [i.e., non-genital] intercourse" with Quint is her "vision" in the parlor. True, fantasy is never quite enough, for the girl bounds outside to seek the genuine article, the envisioned Quint — or, in the title phrase of another story by James, she pursues "The Real Thing." As irrevocably as Mark Twain's jocular Innocents at Gibraltar, the poor, hapless governess is "taken in," but into her sad, private, delusional world, rather than into the viable experience of Twain's luckier "boys." The girl has stepped into the parlor: her illness is the spider, her ego the fly.

Before winding up this turn into James, one might raise the question about the relationship between the governess, who is narrator, and Henry James, who is Maker. Is the girl an *alter ego* for James, or is she a surrogate more than once removed? Indeed, Kenneth Burke has suggested that my present line of inquiry goes in the wrong direction. Mr. Burke thinks that the important problem is James' own pedophilic, pederastic involvement with aristocratic little Miles. Mr. Burke says nothing about the novelist's possible interest in the diabolical, sexual Peter Quint. But I'll let Mr. Burke track that "Beast in the Jungle." (39)

IV

CONCLUSION

Once more, a glove is a glove is a glove: and always was. In searching out the symbols of fiction, Harry Levin has again supplied the requisite warning:

. . . that, I fear, is the trouble with much that passes for psychoanalytic criticism: it reduces our vocabulary of symbols to a few which are so crudely fundamental and so monotonously recurrent that they cannot help the critic to perform his primary function, which is still — I take it — to discriminate. Nature abounds in protuberances and apertures. Convexities and concavities, like Sir Thomas Browne's quincunxes, are everywhere. The forms they compose are not always enhanced or illuminated by reading our sexual obsessions into them. (40)

But just a few pages before, in introducing his inquiry into *Symbolism and Fiction*, Mr. Levin has himself been careful to justify his own position as a seeker after deeper symbolic meanings in American literature: Levin writes: "American literature would all be childishness, the innocent wonderment of the schoolroom,— according to one of its most perceptive interpreters, D. H. Lawrence — if it did not invite us to look beneath its bland surface and to find a diabolic inner meaning." (41)

Indisputably, the gloves in Twain and James always represent their material selves: but, I suggest, they imply sexual things too: perhaps the *same* thing in the "collective

unconscious"—if I may borrow a phrase from Jung—of two American writers as different as Mark Twain and Henry James. The bridge which spans from the individual to the universal is one well traveled by critics. An astute pre-Freudian—and, for that matter, pre-Jungian!—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, observed this bridge when he wrote that a symbol "is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special . . . ; above all, by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal." (42)

The importance of deep symbolic meaning has not yet been pressed for much of Mark Twain's canon; one might make an exception of Twain's late, bitter novel, *The Mysterious Stranger*. Bernard DeVoto did little with Twain's "symbols of despair," save to recognize they are *there*. Van Wyck Brooks' *Ordeal* seems to me a pabulum psychoanalysis of a major writer. Brooks' single thesis—repeated fugue-like—is that the serious side of Mark Twain was intimidated by the pressures of bourgeois culture so that Twain became a self-conscious, self-hating, funny man. Brooks' *Ordeal* has a point, though Brooks' catch-all analysis seems to me glib, charming, and essentially fake. Mark Twain is a serious writer.

However, there is widespread recognition by critics of the importance of symbols in the work of Henry James—for instance, the evanescent heroine, Milly Theale, the vanishing "dove," of James' late novel, *Wings of The Dove* (1902). Austin Warren has said of James' symbolism: "What happens with impressive frequency is the turning of what, in a writer's early work, is 'property' into the 'symbol' of his later work. Thus in his early novels, Henry James painstakingly visualizes persons and places, while, in the later novels, all the images have become metaphoric or symbolic." (43)

A distinguished historian of American literature, Robert E. Spiller, has admired Warren's insights into James, and indeed sets out these insights in the summing up in Spiller's definitive, bibliographical essay on James. Spiller says:

Warren developed his theory . . . in which he bases his argument on the distinction between the method of dialectic and that of myth-making, in that the one uses the reason to express ideas in literal words and the other uses intuition to create images and symbols. He [Warren] finds two kinds of figuration in James: the "extended conceit" of metaphor, and the "emblematic perception" through which the whole truth of a character or a relation is revealed in a symbol. (44)

Now, the respective dichotomies of dialectic and myth-making, of idea and image, of conceit and emblem, are inextricable warp and woof in any writer. Part of the critic's fascinating task is to ravel these diverse strands when confronted by a symbol woven deep into the tapestry. The tapestry is, of course, the entire, intricate arras-web spun out by the artist's imagination. And, here I am pleased to agree with Kenneth Burke that a symbol does acquire a life of its own.

Inevitably, it is hard to say precisely what is on any gifted writer's mind, especially one of the complexity of Mark Twain or Henry James, when the author deals with the elusive stuffs of symbolism. Nevertheless, the critic's hope — more — his job, remains to disentangle. René Wellek has suggested the possible things a piece of work may mean to its creator:

A work of art may rather embody the "dream" of an author than his actual life, or it may be the "mask," the "anti-self" behind which his real person is hiding, or it may be a picture of the life from which the author wants to escape. Furthermore, we must not forget that the artist may "experience" life differently in terms of his art: actual experiences are seen with a view to their use in literature and come to him already partially shaped by artistic traditions and preconceptions. (45)

In sum, I think Mr. Wellek is speaking about literary convention.

My own view sees the "compromise" of art. The writer starts with what he wants to say; next, there is what he *thinks* he wants to say. There follows something quite different — what he *permits* himself to say. And, to go way back to Hemingway's warning in the epigraph to this paper, there is what the reader *prefers to think* the writer is saying. My

further thought is that a symbol provides a subterranean link, a shortcut, an easy way to dodge past some of the terrible barriers of communication between men.

As a surprise expert witness, in this case for symbolism, it is neither from the novelist, nor the psychologist, nor the critic that we take our last word. I'd like to recall a court I have cited earlier: wherever the glove fits, it should be worn. Just as Freud posited that all speech, or writing is pretermitted action, a great jurist has testified that the flag *qua* symbol may represent that for which it stands. In *Barnette v. West Virginia Board of Education*, a Jehovah's Witness flag salute case, the dissenting Mr. Justice Frankfurter underscored the importance of symbols. This judge has long been an advocate of the limited, literal interpretation of language. In part, Mr. Frankfurter's dissent reads:

We are told that symbolism is a dramatic but primitive way of communicating ideas. Symbolism is inescapable. Even the most sophisticated live by symbols. . . . The significance of a symbol lies in what it represents. To reject the swastika does not imply rejection of the Cross. . . . To deny the power to employ educational symbols is to say that the state's educational system may not stimulate the imagination because this may lead to unwise stimulation. (46)

Hopefully, the merchandise selected from Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* has offered symbols which, "stimulate the imagination." And I hope, too, the stimulation provided has not been "unwise." If difficult problems of proof have ordered that I become circumspect as well as circumstantial, my plea is that that nature of what the gloves garb requires deft footwork. Further, if the offense alleged is that of literary experiment, then, by all means, *mea culpa*. My essay has been to relate — through using the probative procedures of evidence — some materials of literature and psychology. This is not at all by way of throwing down the glove to scholarship.

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APPENDIX A

THE LITERARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
MARK TWAIN AND HENRY JAMES

At the outset of this paper, Lionel Trilling has said about the two-way antagonism between Mark Twain and Henry James: “ . . . diverse as they are, indifferent to each other as they mostly were, deeply suspicious of each other as they were whenever they became aware of each other . . . ” (47) An attitude of long periods of neglect, followed by sharp outbursts of hostility, seems indicative of James’ attitude toward Twain. On August 31, 1904, upon seeing Mark Twain, Henry James wrote his brother William from Deal Beach, New Jersey: “ . . . delicious poor dear old M.T. is here and beguiles the sessions on the deep piazza . . . ” (48) Worse yet, Henry James left Mark Twain out of James’ many critical writings about the art of fiction. James’ absorption with the novelist’s control of point of view doubtless made, in James’ view, most of Twain’s novels anti-novels: though James did not reckon even with *Huckleberry Finn* where Twain so splendidly manipulates Huck’s point of view.

Twain’s critical evaluation of James appears to have been less cold, more ambivalent. On October 12, 1876, in a letter to William Dean Howells, their shared friend and encourager, Twain placed Henry James in a school “of the big literary fish.” (49) In the same letter, Twain went on to rank James with — among other distinguished American writers — *himself*: “If we could ring in one or two towering names beside your own, we wouldn’t have to beg the lesser fry very hard. Holmes, Howells, Harte, James, Aldrich, Warner, Trobridge, Twain — now there’s a good & godly gang — team, I mean — everything’s a team, now.—” (50)

However, a decade later, James had plunged downhill in Twain’s esteem. In 1885, James’ novel, *The Bostonians*, was being serialized in *The Century* at the same time that some chapters from *Huckleberry Finn* appeared in that magazine. On July 21, 1885, Twain wrote Howells: “And as for *The*

Bostonians, I would rather be damned to John Bunyan's heaven than read that." (51) Both *The Bostonians*, and *Huckleberry Finn* have, of course, become classics of American literature.

Perhaps the benign influence of Howells worked on Twain: Howells alone was valued in common by his two great friends. Fifteen years later, on January 31, 1900, in the mellowness of age, Twain wrote a letter to T. Douglas Murray about a French book on Twain's beloved heroine Joan of Arc: "If a master — say Henry James — should translate it I think it would live forever." (52) "Master" is, of course, the cachet James liked most. Henry Seidel Canby in *Turn West, Turn East* has suggested that comparison of the two writers offers similarity as well as hostility:

... the men were violently in contrast in temperament, in their art, in their strengths, in their weaknesses, and in their excesses, of which both had plenty. Neither would or could read the other. Everybody else read Twain and only the élite have as yet read Henry James. Mark was often offensively American. Henry shocked even his family by his patina (it was only a patina) of Britishness. Yet both men will live in literature by best describing what each called American innocence for an increasingly curious world. (53)

Mark Twain and Henry James shared the phrase and the idea of a "new deal." On October 12, 1876, Twain wrote Howells about a new literary idea for "Blindfold Novelettes": "We must have a new deal." (54) Later, in 1886, in the pages of *The Atlantic*, in James' novel about anarchist intrigues, *The Princess Casamassima*, a character says: "Possibly you don't know that I am one of those who believe that a great new deal is destined to take place and that it can't make things worse than they are." (55) Three years later, in 1889, Twain again raised the "new deal" in his bittersweet book, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*: it was from *Yankee* that Franklin D. Roosevelt picked up the phrase. (56) The notable differences and similarities between Mark Twain and Henry James — and my thesis has been that both employed gloves as phallic symbols, though

probably on an unconscious level, and in altogether diverse literary contexts — may serve to support William James' shrewd observation that there is very little difference between one man and another, but what little there is, is very important.

Professor Trilling seems right to raise the notion — then deny it — that the two writers "are opposite poles of our national character . . ." (57) For each largely to ignore the other was easier than for each to contend with the other as a rival practitioner in their common craft of fiction. The two men have come down as the two most significant writers in a time not distinguished by literary greatness. Professor Henry Nash Smith has summed up American literature in the thirty years following the Civil War:

Despite the work of Henry James and Mark Twain, it was an age of transition rather than of fulfillment. The prewar enlightenment which had so variously and richly expressed the insights of transcendentalism was fading; and although there was no lack of new ideas, none appeared that was capable of providing the impetus for a literature commensurate with the nation created by the war. (58)

APPENDIX B

TEXT FROM MARK TWAIN'S *THE INNOCENTS ABROAD*

Every now and then, my glove purchase in Gibraltar last night intrudes itself upon me. Dan and the ship's surgeon and I had been up to the great square, listening to the music of the fine military bands, and contemplating English and Spanish female loveliness and fashion, and, at 9 o'clock, were on our way to the theater, when we met the General, the Judge, the Commodore, the Colonel, and the Commissioner of the United States of America to Europe, Asia, and Africa, who had been to the Club House, to register their several titles and impoverish the bill of fare; and they told us to go over to the little variety store, near the Hall of Justice, and buy some kid gloves. They said they were elegant, and very moderate in price. It seemed a stylish thing to go to the

theater in kid gloves, and we acted upon the hint. A very handsome young lady in the store offered me a pair of blue gloves. I did not want blue, but she said they would look very pretty on a hand like mine. The remark touched me tenderly. I glanced furtively at my hand, and somehow it did seem rather a comely member. I tried a glove on my left, and blushed a little. Manifestly the size was too small for me. But I felt gratified when she said:

“Oh, it is just right!” — yet I knew it was no such thing.

I tugged at it diligently, but it was discouraging work. She said:

“Ah! I see *you* are accustomed to wearing kid gloves — but some gentlemen are *so* awkward about putting them on.”

It was the last compliment I had expected. I only understand putting on the buckskin article perfectly. I made another effort, and tore the glove from the base of the thumb into the palm of the hand — and tried to hide the rent. She kept up her compliments, and I kept up my determination to deserve them or die:

“Ah, you have had experience!” (A rip down the back of the hand.) “They are just right for you — your hand is very small — if they tear you need not pay for them.” (A rent across the middle.) “I can always tell when a gentleman understands putting on kid gloves. There is a grace about it that only comes with long practice.” (The whole after guard of the glove “fetched away,” as the sailors say, the fabric parted across the knuckles, and nothing was left but a melancholy ruin.)

I was too much flattered to make an exposure, and throw the merchandise on the angel’s hands. I was hot, vexed, confused, but still happy; but I hated the other boys for taking such an absorbing interest in the proceedings. I wished they were in Jericho. I felt exquisitely mean when I said cheerfully:

“This one does very well; it fits elegantly. I like a glove that fits. No, never mind, ma’am, never mind; I’ll put the other on in the street. It is warm here.”

It was warm. It was the warmest place I ever was in.

I paid the bill, and as I passed out with a fascinating bow, I thought I detected a light in the woman's eye that was gently ironical; and when I looked back from the street, and she was laughing all to herself about something or other, I said to myself, with withering sarcasm, "Oh, certainly; *you* know how to put on kid gloves, don't you? — a self-complacent ass, ready to be flattered out of your senses by every petticoat that chooses to take the trouble to do it!"

The silence of the boys annoyed me. Finally, Dan said, musingly:

"Some gentlemen don't know how to put on kid gloves at all; but some do."

And the doctor said (to the moon, I thought):

"But it is always easy to tell when a gentleman is used to putting on kid gloves."

Dan soliloquized, after a pause:

"Ah, yes; there is a grace about it that only comes with long, very long practice."

"Yes, indeed, I've noticed that when a man hauls on a kid glove like he was dragging a cat out of an ash-hole by the tail, *he* understands putting on kid gloves; *he*'s had ex—"

"Boys, enough of a thing's enough! You think you are very smart, I suppose, but I don't. And if you go and tell any of those old gossips in the ship about this thing, I'll never forgive you for it; that's all."

They let me alone then, for the time being. We always let each other alone in time to prevent ill feeling from spoiling a joke. But they had bought gloves, too, as I did. We threw all the purchases away together this morning. They were coarse, unsubstantial, freckled all over with broad yellow splotches, and could neither stand wear nor public exhibition. We had entertained an angel unawares, but we did not take her in. She did that for us. (59)

APPENDIX C

TEXT FROM HENRY JAMES' THE TURN OF THE SCREW

There was a Sunday—to get on—when it rained with

such force and for so many hours that there could be no procession to church; in consequence of which, as the day declined, I had arranged with Mrs. Grose that, should the evening show improvement, we would attend together the late service. The rain happily stopped, and I prepared for our walk, which, through the park and by the good road to the village, would be a matter of twenty minutes. Coming downstairs to meet my colleague in the hall, I remembered a pair of gloves that had required three stitches and that had received them—with a publicity perhaps not edifying—while I sat with the children at their tea, served on Sundays, by exception, in that cold, clean temple of mahogany and brass, the “grown-up” dining-room. The gloves had been dropped there, and I turned in to recover them. The day was grey enough, but the afternoon light still lingered, and it enabled me, on crossing the threshold, not only to recognise, on a chair near the wide window, then closed, the articles I wanted, but to become aware of a person on the other side of the window and looking straight in. One step into the room had sufficed; my vision was instantaneous; it was all there. The person looking straight in was the person who had already appeared to me. He appeared thus again with I won’t say greater distinctness, for that was impossible, but with a nearness that represented a forward stride in our intercourse and made me, as I met him, catch my breath and turn cold. He was the same—he was the same, and seen, this time, as he had been seen before, from the waist up, the window, though the dining-room was on the ground-floor, not going down to the terrace on which he stood. His face was close to the glass, yet the effect of this better view was, strangely, only to show me how intense the former had been. He remained but a few seconds—long enough to convince me he also saw and recognised; but it was as if I had been looking at him for years and had known him always. Something, however, happened this time that had not happened before; his stare into my face, through the glass and across the room, was as deep and hard as then, but it quitted me for a moment during which I could still watch it, see it fix suc-

cessively several other things. On the spot there came to me the added shock of a certitude that it was not for me he had come there. He had come for someone else. (60)

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BACKNOTES

I

INTRODUCTION

1. Lionel Trilling, "William Dean Howells and the Roots of Modern Taste," *The Opposing Self* (New York, 1955), pp. 76-77.
2. Mark Schorer, "Fiction and the 'Analogical Matrix,'" *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction* (1920-1951), ed. John W. Aldridge (New York, 1952), p. 83. Mr. Schorer credits Scott Buchanan with the phrase, "analogical matrix."
3. Samuel L. Clemens [Mark Twain], *The Innocents Abroad or the New Pilgrims' Progress: Being Some Account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land* (Two Volumes) (New York and London, 1911). See the unpubl. diss. (Chicago, 1945) by Leon Townsend Dickinson, "Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*: Its Origins, Composition and Popularity," *passim*. See also article based upon his dissertation by Leon Townsend Dickinson, "Mark Twain's Revisions in Writing *The Innocents Abroad*," *American Literature XIX* (1947) 139-157.
4. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, in *The Story: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Mark Schorer (New York, 1950), pp. 435-560. Edmund Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," in *The Story*, *ibid.*, p. 573.
5. Harry Levin, *Symbolism and Fiction* (Charlottesville, 1956), pp. 12-13.
6. Robert Heilman, "The Turn of the Screw as Poem," in *The Story*, *op. cit.*, cf. esp. note on p. 587. See also the bibliographical essay on Henry James by Robert Spiller in *Eight American*

Authors: A Review of Research and Criticism, ed. Floyd Stovall (New York, 1956), pp. 364-418. Kenneth Burke has indicated his doubts in letters to this writer, dated August 18, 1958 and September 28, 1958.

7. Wilson, *The Story*, p. 583.
8. James, *The Story*, pp. 462-463.
9. *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943), Mr. Justice Frankfurter dissenting at p. 662.
10. Honoré de Balzac, *Le Père Goriot: Scènes de la Vie Privée*, La Renaissance de Livre (Paris, s.d.) Honoré de Balzac, *Old Goriot*, tr. Ellen Marriage (New York, 1948), p. 239.
11. *Towne v. Eisner*, 845 U.S. 418, at 425 (1918).
12. Harold Edwin Eby, *A Concordance of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose Writings* (Seattle, 1949), fasc. I, p. 229. Stanza and line numbers are indicated within the parentheses following the quotations.
13. Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York, 1947), p. 189, note.
14. Dickinson, *op. cit.*, *passim*, both dissertation and article. An unpublished paper by the present writer, "The Innocents Abroad as *Bildungsroman*" follows the growth of fictiveness in Twain's work in *The Innocents*.
15. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (New York, 1950), *passim*. Mr. Brooks first published his *Ordeal* in 1920; he revised and expanded his thesis in 1933. William G. Barrett, "Mark Twain's Osteopathic Cure," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, XXII (1953) 539-547. William G. Barrett, "On the Naming of Tom Sawyer," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* XXIV (1955) 424-436.
16. Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York, 1949), *passim*.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
18. Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
19. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 51. Chapter II of Mrs. Langer's book, "Symbolic Transformation," is a treasure-trove of material on symbols.
20. Kenneth Burke, "Lexicon Rhetoricae," in *Critiques and Essays in Criticism 1920-1948: Representing the Achievement of Modern British and American Critics*, ed. Robert W. Stallman (New York, 1949), p. 249. The selections by Mr. Burke are taken from "Lexicon Rhetoricae," in Burke's *Counter-Statement* (1931).
21. *Webster's New International Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Unabridged) (Springfield, Mass., 1954) p. 2555.

II

MARK TWAIN'S INNOCENTS AT GIBRALTER

22. Samuel L. Clemens [Mark Twain], *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 60. Here

- after, page references to *The Innocents Abroad* will be included within the parentheses which follow the allusion. In a series, only the first reference will be designated — thus (I:60).
23. Samuel L. Clemens [Mark Twain], "The *Quaker City* Land Excursion: An Unfinished Play by Mark Twain," (1867), privately printed (200 copies, 1927). Also see letter from Clemens to Charles Henry Webb written in Washington, D.C., dated November 25, 1867 which explains why Twain was not able to finish the "Quaker City" play. The holographs of these two documents are in the Josiah Lilly collection, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. I am grateful to Mr. David Randall, the Rare Books Librarian in Bloomington, for allowing me to study these materials.
 24. *Mark Twain's Notebook*, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York, 1935), pp. 63-64. In entries under June, 1867. Paine places this episode in Tangier, but Twain gives Gibraltar as the situs for the incident in *The Innocents* (I:60).
 25. *Notebook*, op. cit., p. 64.
 26. Mark Schorer, "Comment," in *The Story*, op. cit., pp. 425-428.
 27. H. L. Mencken, *The American Language: An Inquiry Into the Development of English in the United States* (Supplement I) (New York, 1945), p. 11.
 28. Howard Baker, *Orange Valley* (New York, 1931), p. 8.
 29. Howard Mumford Jones, *The Frontier in American Fiction: Four Lectures on the Relation of Landscape to Literature* (Jerusalem, 1956), p. 68.
 30. Sigmund Freud, "Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious," *Basic Writings* (New York, 1938), p. 799.
 31. Samuel L. Clemens [Mark Twain], *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Henry Nash Smith (Boston, 1958), p. 86 and *passim*. See, especially, chapter XVII, pp. 86-88, on the macabre, hilarious, late Emmeline Grangerford.
 32. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night: A Romance* (New York, 1934), p. 85.

III

HENRY JAMES' GOVERNESS AT BLY

33. Henry James, *The Story*, pp. 462-463. Hereafter page references to *The Turn of the Screw* will be included within the parentheses which follow the allusion. In a series, only the first references to a page will be so designated — thus (462-463).
34. See Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery" in *Forms of Modern Fiction*, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis, 1948), pp. 9-29.
35. Jacques Barzun, *Teacher in America* (Boston, 1946), p. 59. See

also Jacques Barzun, "The Melodrama of Henry James," in *The Question of Henry James*, ed. Frederick Dupee (New York, 1945), pp. 254-266.

36. Levin, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.
37. A single case in point from Freud can illustrate. Treating "the psychology of errors," Freud analyzes Caesar's failure of memory about Cleopatra in Shaw's comedy, *Caesar and Cleopatra*:

If the meaning of forgetting resolutions is so little open to doubt in the minds of people in general you will be the less surprised to find that writers employ such mistakes in a similar sense. Those of you who have seen or read Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* will recall that Caesar, when departing in the last scene, is pursued by the feeling that there was something else he intended to do which he had now forgotten. At last it turns out what it is: to say farewell to Cleopatra. By this small device the author attempts to ascribe to the great Caesar a feeling of superiority which he did not possess and to which he did not at all aspire. You can learn from historical sources that Caesar arranged for Cleopatra to follow him to Rome and that she was living there with her little Caesari on when Caesar was murdered, whereupon she fled the city.

Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psycho-analysis*, tr. Joan Riviere, 1920; reprinted (Garden City, 1943), p. 49.

38. Wilson, *The Story*, p. 585.
39. Kenneth Burke, letters to writer, August 18, 1958 and September 28, 1958.

IV

CONCLUSION

40. Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
42. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual: Complete Works*, ed. Shedd (New York, 1853) Vol. 1, pp. 437-438.
43. René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 2d ed. (New York, 1955), pp. 178-179.
44. Robert Spiller, "Henry James," *Eight American Authors*, *op. cit.*, p. 418.
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APPENDIX A

The Literary Relationship between Mark Twain and Henry James

47. Trilling, *The Opposing Self*, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.
48. *Mark Twain - Howells Letters: The Correspondence of Samuel L. Clemens & William D. Howells [1869-1910]*, eds. Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), II, 789. Hereafter, called *Letters*.

On the other hand, *The Letters of Henry James* (Two Volumes), ed. Percy Lubbock (New York, 1920) and *The Selected Letters of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1955) contain no allusions to Mark Twain.

49. *Letters* (I: 160).
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.* (II: 534).
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53. Henry Seidel Canby, *Turn West, Turn East: Mark Twain and Henry James* (Boston, 1951), Introduction, p. xii.
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APPENDIX B

Text from Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*

59. Samuel L. Clemens [Mark Twain], *The Innocents Abroad*, *op. cit.*, (I: 60-63).

APPENDIX C

Text from Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*

60. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, in *The Story*, *op. cit.*, pp. 462-463.



The Ritual Origin of Plato's Dialogues:

*A Study of Argumentation and Conversation
among Intellectuals*

by

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The intellectual tradition of the western world to a large extent stems from Greek philosophy, and the Dialogues of Plato represent perhaps man's first major effort in dialectical thinking about the individual in society and in the cosmos. The writings of Plato may be regarded as the origin of intellectual communication, which we shall see is ambivalent in nature, expressing both competitive struggle and inspirational catharsis. The psychoanalytic interview is a type of intellectual dialogue which, like a Platonic dialogue, aims at a form of initiation or purification; indeed, we shall see that Plato's philosophy historically stemmed from tribal initiation ceremonies in early Greece.

It has long been recognized by scholars that much of the imagery in Plato's Dialogues stemmed from religious ideas and practices which existed in early Greek culture. Cornford suggested, for example, that the procession of images carried across the fire-lit cave in the *Republic* may have stemmed from the exhibition of mystic symbols in the darkness of the initiation ceremonies at Eleusis. (1) The image of the horses and charioteer in the *Phaedrus* seems also to have been borrowed from the Eleusinian mysteries, well as from Orphic and Pythagorean religious beliefs. (2) The number mysticism in Plato is of Pythagorean origin; and the central theme in Plato—the conversion of the guilty person through moral, intellectual, and emotional purification—has often been traced back to Orphism. Jane Harrison said:

"Plato's whole scheme alike of education and philosophy is but an attempted rationalization of the primitive mysticism of initiation, and most of all of that profound mysticism

of the central *rite de passage*, the death and the new birth, social, moral, intellectual." (3)

Plato's style of writing, the presentation of his material in dialogue form, and his poetic philosophy clearly show him to be partially a playwright, an individual interested in expressing his ideas in dramatic form. Indeed, Plato is believed to have followed Sophron, a writer of farces (*mimos*) when composing his Dialogues; and Aristotle, in fact, actually calls the dialogue a form of *mimos*. Now the *mimos* stems from comedy, and Greek comedy originated in early religious ritual, as did tragedy.

The purpose of this paper is to present the hypothesis that Plato's Dialogues can be traced back to primitive Greek fertility rites concerned with the contest between the old and new king as representatives of the creative powers of nature, with the communion sacrifice, the initiation ceremony, and with the sacred marriage.

Before entering upon a discussion of this hypothesis, we may profit by pondering for a while upon the motivations for early Greek philosophy. As Cornford has emphasized, philosophy did not arise from the disinterested speculations of a solitary thinker engaged in reflecting objectively upon the nature of the universe. Rather, the philosopher was at first an individual deeply involved in the social life of his time, in the conflicts and problems of his community. Pre-Socratic philosophy resulted from the projection of the tribal social structure into the cosmos; the early thinkers were basically concerned with interpersonal conflicts, not with the nature of the world. Therefore, early concepts, such as time, number, and causality, which relate to the physical universe, were at first drawn from the social order. Indeed, the very notion of an orderly cosmos is derived from the notion of community order. (4)

Early philosophizing was actually of the nature of a legal argument, an attempt to ascertain the laws which should govern men in their everyday conflicts of interest. By proving that these laws inhere somehow in nature, the thinker could then proceed to state that human society is also subject to

the same laws. This effort is particularly evident in Plato's *Timaeus*, in which the order and harmony in the universe is regarded as implanted within the soul of each person as a basic instinct which matures into the order and harmony of true morality. Thus, cosmological argumentation actually stemmed from the need to resolve crises and conflicts within the social group; cosmology was the search for a legal solution.

Indeed, the first lawyers and magistrates were actually the priests. (5) These religious judges were akin to primitive *shamans*, tribal magicians — seers and prophets who sought to ascertain the will of the gods through the study of omens, the entrails of sacrificial animals, oracles, and ancestral lore in general. Philosophy originated in the effort of the tribal wise man to seek to resolve human conflicts through some type of divination of the laws willed by the deity. In the pre-Socratic philosophies, of course, we find an advanced culture already in existence, the magical aspects of the mantic art are dying out, and the wise men seek to understand the nature of things in order to find a basis for justice in the community. Nevertheless, the early Greek philosophers, as Cornford has shown, can be seen to be emerging out of the inspired holy men filled with revealed truths about the universe. These seers and prophets are not far distant from the primitive *shaman*. This is particularly evident in the mysticism of Empedocles, who appears to have been partially a medicine-man, rain-maker, and curer of souls, and who seems to have regarded himself as an incarnate god.

"Beyond the horizon of the ancient Greeks there exists abundant evidence for the combination prophet-poet-sage, and the implied belief that all exceptional wisdom is the prerogative of inspired or mantic persons who are in touch with the other world of gods or spirits. We are concerned with a certain phase of social development which exhibits a constant character, though in different countries it may appear at widely different dates in the world's history." (6)

The wise men of the tribal group or early city (which was usually some type of tribal intermingling) no doubt would

often hold conflicting opinions as to the resolution of conflicts within the community. Such disagreements would manifest themselves in legal argumentation, which we have seen were often of the nature of cosmological disputes. Now it is in these legal-cosmological arguments, basically concerned with the problems of men, that philosophical discussion originated.

We must not, however, envisage the everyday life of the ancient Greeks as composed of groups of high-minded scholars leisurely discussing the nature of eternal truths in a dispassionate manner. Rather, as Onians has documented, early Greece was a raw and rough land, in which savagery and cruelty were common, and in which a man had to fight to preserve his property, his life, and his clan. (7) Society was ruled, as Hasebroeck said, by "force and unrestricted brutality." (8)

The conflict of interest was at first manifested in direct physical combat — in wars, feuds, or personal hand-to-hand struggle. Such combat was no doubt accompanied by heated exchanges of words, often perhaps in the form of magical imprecations designed to harm the antagonist.

These magical imprecations survive in our own times in the crudest form of argumentation we know of, in the form of "cursing", in which each participant in the quarrel shouts ugly words at the other. This type of verbal battle is very close to physical combat, and frequently accompanies, or eventuates into fist-fights, stabbings, and other such actions, which we now regard as criminal.

The verbal battle is the beginning of law, for in "cursing" each other the antagonists invoke the various divine powers to aid them and to harm the foe; this invocation of the gods tacitly assumes that the will of the god is on their side. The similarity to sibling rivalry here is obvious; children frequently invoke the name of the parent, or the memory of the parent's precepts, in order to win arguments.

Now the first rulers, or kings, were actually the tribal magicians, as the work of Frazer indicates; so that these early verbal battles were probably fought between the magician-

kings. However, since the verbal battle probably often occurred within the kinship group, these contests with words were very likely between rival medicine-men, or between rival aspirants to the kingship. In the earliest times, the struggle for power was no doubt between the father and one of his sons. Certainly there are numerous traces of ritual struggles for the priest-kingship in ancient Greece, in which the aspirant must physically defeat the reigning king to attain the position of ruler. (9) In these ritual combats the king, as magician, personified the powers of fertility within the vegetation, and the victor mated with the fertility queen, in order to promote the growth of the crops.

The struggle for the kingship was of course a struggle for social power, although for primitive man this also represented magical power over nature. In any case, the priest-king, who often indeed was identified with the god, was the source of the law of the kinship group. So that the origin of law was in physical combat, which later became verbal combat. Philosophy originated, then, in legal argumentation, or a contest in magical words.

These verbal contests, as has been stated above, must have consisted to a large extent of an exchange of curses, the winner being he who was most gifted in this type of combat. The legal argument was to a great measure an unrestrained interchange of mutual ridicule, abuse, slander, and false accusation, such as even today we encounter in the vile arguments of some uneducated and uncultivated individuals. Such bragging and scoffing contests, Huizinga writes, play an important part in many primitive cultures, and are similar to potlatch customs, whose main purpose is to humiliate the others. (10) Formal reviling matches were common in early Arabia, for example, as well as among the Eskimos, among whom the "drumming match" is the only form of judicial process. Huizinga states that even in classical Greece legal oration is scarcely discernible from the reviling match. Eloquence in juristic procedures was largely a contest in oratory, and the Sophists educated ambitious young men in the art of winning such contests.

Ancient legal procedure was actually a religious ritual, an orderly process on earth which was a counterpart of the sacred order in the cosmos. The very term "process", which is so important in the physical sciences, originated as a designation of legal procedure. Fustel de Coulanges has dwelt upon the rigid formalism of ancient law, which stemmed from the ancestral cult, the worship of the dead *heroes*, regarded as gods. The process of law was thus a rite, and the ritual legal contest was antedated by the ritual verbal combat.

"Greek tradition has numerous traces of ceremonial and festal slanging-matches. The word *iambos* is held by some to have meant originally 'derision', with particular reference to the public skits and scurrilous songs which formed part of the feasts of Demeter and Dionysus. The biting satire of Archilochus is supposed to have developed out of this slating in public. Thus, from an immemorial custom of ritual nature, iambic poetry became an instrument of public criticisms."
(11)

In Greece, Huizinga says, legal proceedings were regarded as a sacred contest, or *agon*. In other words, they were a struggle for power within the social group, a struggle which in the earliest times must have taken the form of physical violence between the reigning king and the aspirant for this office. The Olympic Games also represent an outgrowth of the physical struggle for dominance in the community; Cornford has shown that these religious games stemmed from the fight for the kingship, the winner becoming the new fertility-spirit. (12)

The legal argument is thus a higher form of hand-to-hand conflict, the debate taking the place of the wrestling-match or foot-race, which games originally must have eventuated in the death or dismemberment of the loser. The legal argument is won by the person with the greatest forensic power. Now the highest form of the legal antagonism is the philosophical combat, the debate concerning the principles of law which underlie the particular human conflict. Philosophical discourse was thus an emergent from the affairs of men in real life, and the abstract discussions of meta-

physics, methodology, and logic stemmed from the effort to solve real problems in everyday experience. The early philosopher, Huizinga writes, always appeared as a typical champion, throwing down a challenge to his rivals in a vain, impassioned, and self-assured manner. The philosophical *agon* took the form of beating the rival intellectual in the display of knowledge about the cosmos. In the earliest times, such verbal contests were concerned with knowledge of divine processes, i.e., magical powers. These primitive contests in knowledge may often have taken the form of competitive riddle-solving. Vedic traditions show that ritual contests in the answering of riddles were an essential part of the great sacrificial festivals. To the primitive mind, the riddle is no mere parlour-game, but is a mystery of religion, and the words which solve the holy enigma possess magical powers for controlling divine processes.

"The Greeks of the later period were perfectly well aware of the connection between riddle-solving and the origins of philosophy. . . . Indeed, it would not be too strenuous or far-fetched to derive the earliest products of Greek philosophy from those immemorial riddle-questions." (13)

The Greek Sophist may be regarded as having originated in the archaic figure of the prophet, medicine-man, or seer. The function of the sophist is to exhibit his great knowledge; like a visiting athlete, he challenges the local talent to combat in the mysteries of philosophy, defeating his rival in public verbal wrestling, and making money through the display of his amazing powers.

Thus far, we have sought to establish that philosophical argumentation originated in actual physical struggles for power, such as are found in primitive fertility rituals. The philosopher is the successor to the priestly king who obtained power through a ritual combat culminating in the dismemberment of the loser.

The history of philosophy is generally written by starting with the Milesian thinkers, who preceded Plato. What remains of their thought appears to be speculations about the physical universe, but it has been shown that these cosmo-

gonical considerations were actually drawn from the socio-logical framework of early Greek tribal communities. Cornford, in fact, has traced back the philosophical system of Anaximander to a type of cosmogony which appears in Hesiod, and which in turn probably originated in fertility rituals similar to those found in early Babylonia, (14) of which Cornford wrote.

"In the present case, the core of the whole festival is evidently the renewal of the life of nature by the death, resurrection, and marriage of the fertility spirit, embodied in the King. Traces are still discernible of a much earlier phase in which the human representative of the spirit may have been annually slain and succeeded by his slayer, or deposed when his strength waned to give place to his son." (15)

We have now to consider the origin of Greek dramatic forms, particularly the comedy, from which we suggest the Dialogues of Plato emerged.

Aristotle stated that comedy originated with the leaders of the phallic songs, and tragedy with the leaders of the dithyramb. According to Cornford's analysis, both of these dramatic forms stemmed from a common ritual, which we must now examine.

It must be stated at the outset that in early Greece phallic songs would not necessarily be regarded as obscene; it was only in later times that sexual activities were to be thought of as gross, shameful, and dirty. The generative organs could thus symbolize, not only the fleshly desires, but also the creative powers of nature expressing themselves in human life and in the fertility of the crops. Schiller's Ode to Joy, which has reference to the mysteries of Eleusis, expresses sublime human emotions which are not dissociated from sexual love.

Aristophanic plays, in Cornford's analysis, arose from a religious ceremony consisting of the following sequence of actions: an agon, or contest; the entrance of the chorus; a sacrifice; a phallic procession called the *komos* (from which the word "comedy"); and a sacred marriage.

The individual who leads the torchlit procession, or

komos, is usually, in these ancient plays, the victor in the *agon* at the beginning of the dramatic procession. Examination of the material indicates, according to Cornford, that this individual actually represented the fertility spirit, the king who embodied magically the vitality of the vegetation, and the sacred contest is an expression of his struggle with the previous year's fertility-king. The marriage at the end of the play is a typical sacred marriage to the mother goddess, such as is performed in many primitive cultures to bring about a renewal of the creative energies in the crops and in nature. Traces of such sacred marriages, in which the king and queen of fertility performed sexual intercourse in the fields to stimulate magically the growth of vegetation, have been found in numerous forms of early literature and dramatics. The phallic song chanted during the *komos* was a hymn to the creative powers of nature, embodied by the new fertility king.

In the fertility ritual from which comedy originated, the sacrifice retains traces, Cornford said, of an older ritual, an omophagy, or eating of the god-king by his worshippers. In later times, it seems likely that this episode, too ghastly for a more advanced culture, was perpetuated in the form of an initiation ceremony, the divine king being cooked and eaten merely symbolically. The king, thus, is no longer killed by his successor and eaten at the end of his term of office, but is only publicly humiliated, or in some sense reborn as a new person.

The chorus in Greek comedy often appears in a scene in which its members physically attack one of the contestants, prior to the *agon*. The chorus, by the way, is never impartial in this contest, but always takes the side of one of the antagonists. There is ample evidence in early Greek fertility cults of ritual matches of abuse between two or more groups of individuals. Such rituals are very common among primitives, and were regarded by Frazer as being connected with the promotion of the fertility of the crops.

Cornford concluded that Attic comedy represented a survival of such matches in abuse between two parties. The *agon* itself, he said,

" . . . is the survival of a ritual combat of the two champions, on its way to become a mere debate, but still keeping sufficient traces of the time when it ended in the real or simulated death of one of the combatants." (16)

Our hypothesis that philosophical argumentation originated in a ritual contest for social power is thus supported by Cornford's theory of the beginnings of comedy, from which the Dialogues of Plato stemmed.

A further type of evidence is available, by analogy, in the literature of the debates of the Middle Ages, which was also discussed by Cornford. (17) These debates were dialogues, in the nature of disputes, between two persons, and were traced by Chambers in the *Medieval Stage* back to fertility rituals in which there is an interchange of vile abuse taking the place of an actual physical combat. Plato's Dialogues are obviously similar to these medieval writings, and Professor Butcher states, "A play of Aristophanes is a dramatized debate, an agon, in which the persons represent opposing principles; for in form the piece is always combative, though the fight may be but a mock fight." (18)

Up to now, we have in this essay treated the philosopher in a rather disparaging way, regarding him as basically a highly competitive individual utilizing his intellectual powers as a tool for the winning of power or for becoming the center of learned attention. For all his brilliance, such a thinker remains at heart the agonist fighting to attain, or to retain the kingship in a ritual combat in the same pattern as the succession to the priesthood in the sacred grove of Diana at Nemi, which Frazer showed was the prize for the victor in a physical struggle between the old king and the aspirant.

This description of the intellectual, however, is somewhat unfair, for it fails to take into account the genuinely high moral standards and fineness of character of many philosophers and men of knowledge. Furthermore, even in instances in which the intellectual is mainly motivated by the desire for personal power and eminence, we must account for the fact that it is necessary for such an individual to hide his true drives beneath a masquerade of humility and dispassionate

objectivity. This hypocrisy, to the credit of such intellectuals, is often unconscious, and stems from childhood repressions, rather than being a deliberate strategy.

The higher aspect of the intellectual life, and that quality which may be said to distinguish a "true philosopher" from the combative debater is the capacity to renounce the inner passion for dominating others. This renunciation is actually the central theme in the philosophy of Plato, and it is in this respect that the Dialogues can be traced back to the tragic element in ancient religious ritual.

The tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripedes were performed in ancient Athens at the festival called the Great Dionysia, and the dithyramb — from which Aristotle said Greek tragedy originated — was a hymn to the birth of Dionysos, which was enacted in early initiation and sacrificial rituals. These rites, which formed an important part of the Orphic mysteries, were composed of three parts:

(1) A child is taken away from his mother and carefully tended by men called Kouretes. To guard him they dance over him an armed dance.

(2) The child is hidden, made away with, killed, and dismembered by men called "Titans", "white-clay-men".

(3) The child reappears, is brought back to life again. In some instances this is accomplished by the white-clay-men; at other times the child reappears as a white-clay-man himself.

Numerous scholars, and particularly Jane Harrison, have interpreted this mimic death and resurrection of Dionysos as the survival of an initiation rite, such as is found among primitives all over the world. The Titans are simply real men dressed up for the performance of the ritual. (19) The Cretans had a biennial festival at which the passion of Dionysos was enacted before the worshippers, who tore a living bull to pieces. In Greece, Dionysos, who is equivalent to Zeus, was often personified as a bull in these initiatory rituals from which tragedy originated.

Orphic mythology explains these rituals as follows: Zeus had a son, Dionysos-Zagreus, by Persephone, queen of the underworld. Zeus made known his intention of making his

child the ruler of the world, but the Titans lured the infant with toys, then killed it, eating its limbs. The heart, however, was saved, and was swallowed by Zeus, thus giving birth to a new Dionysos, the son of Semele. To punish the Titans, Zeus burned them to ashes with a bolt of lightning. From these ashes, the human race was formed; man, therefore, contains a dual nature — a divine part, coming from Dionysos, and an evil part, coming from the Titans. According to this myth, man's sense of guilt resulted from this original sin. As punishment, man's soul was enclosed in the body as in a tomb or prison. In the religion of Orphism, man finds final liberation from his Titanic inheritance by means of purificatory rituals and the practice of asceticism. (20)

Scholars such as Cornford, Jane Harrison, and Macchioro (21) have shown that Orphic beliefs formed the basis for the philosophical speculations of later Greek thought. Orphic ideas, re-worked by Pythagoras, were taken over by Plato and the neo-Platonists, thus entering the entire tradition of Western philosophy.

In Plato's dialogue, *Phaedo*, for example, the doctrine of man's freedom from his evil desires through a systematic intellectual purification is set forth, culminating in man's ascent to *theoria*, or union with the divine.

" . . . the Orphic still clung to the emotional experience of reunion and the ritual that induced it, and, in particular, to the passionate spectacle (*theoria*) of the suffering God. Pythagoras gave a new meaning to *theoria*; he interpreted it as the passionless contemplation of rational, unchanging truth. The way of life is . . . death to the emotions and lusts of this vile body, and a release of the intellect to soar into the untroubled empyrean of *theory*. This is now the only avenue by which the soul can 'follow God' . . . , who has ascended beyond the stars." (22)

Both comedy and tragedy are concerned with the annual ritual of the killing of the fertility-king. Gilbert Murray distinguished the following sequence of actions in the myths pertaining to the rites from which tragedy originated: an *agon*; a *pathos*, a sacrificial death of the god; an announce-

ment of the death of the god; lamentation, intermixed with exaltation at the triumph of the new over the old fertility-spirit; and a resurrection of the god. (23)

In comedy, the contest between the old and new king is followed by a marriage celebration, whereas in tragedy the agon is followed by the triumphant resurrection of the deity.

Gilbert Murray has shown how the killing of the fertility-spirit gave rise to the doctrine of *hubris*, in which the Greeks found the essence of tragedy. In tragic drama, *hubris*, the sin of excessive pride, or insolence, is the quality which ultimately causes the destruction of the hero. Cornford regards comedy as concerned essentially with the same moral flaw, except that in comedy the pride of the central character is such as to make him simply seem ridiculous, or funny. (24)

We may now elucidate why the initiation ritual is concerned with the killing and resurrection of the king-god. Initiation is one of the most primitive forms of the educational institution:

"The initiation ceremonies . . . are organized and conducted by the elders who are the responsible guardians of the state. They have a definite and reasonable purpose: the young men growing into manhood must learn their duties as members of the community; they must be schooled in the traditions and moral regulations developed through long periods of tribal experience. On the transmission and perpetuation of this experience, the life of the community depends puberty rites constitute the most effective means of providing that subordination of the interests of the individual to the welfare of the whole without which social progress cannot be long maintained." (25)

The fundamental aim of the Greek initiation ritual from which tragedy arose was to expurgate the *hubris* from the maturing youths, through a mimic depiction of the fate of the individual possessing excessive pride. The young men are subjected to an ordeal (which in some savage societies actually causes the death or serious injury of the neophyte in some instances), whose severity is supposed to bring about their moral regeneration. In a similar manner, in the tragic drama,

the audience, through empathy with the hero, undergoes a similar catharsis.

The figure of Socrates has been compared with that of the *pharmakos* in early Greek culture, an individual who is killed, beaten, or driven out of the community as the representative of some evil afflicting the group. The death of the scapegoat is purificatory, in that it releases the community from some guilt which has oppressed the citizens.

We have already dwelt upon the purificatory theme in the Dialogues of Plato. The questionings of Socrates, whose aim was to clarify the thinking of the Athenians, had as their goal the expurgation of superficial and confused ideas. Through his insistent and systematic interrogation, Socrates sought the moral enlightenment of the citizens of Athens—the renunciation of vain desires and excessive self-esteem in the service of higher emotional commitment to the ideals of the community. This purificatory theme was carried on in the neo-Platonic philosophers, and may be regarded as present, in a certain sense, in the “phenomenological reduction” of the modern thinker, Edmund Husserl.

We stated previously that intellectual discussion can be considered as having partially originated in legal combat, which in turn stemmed from the physical struggle for power. In his maturity, however, the true philosopher has purged from himself whatever innate combativeness he may have had. Through self-examination and conscious suppression of his irrational passions, he eventually emerges as an individual desiring only a harmonious and reasonable evaluation of all facts pertaining to the conflicts which arise within the community. His actions are driven neither by egotism nor by submission to the community, but are controlled by an inner awareness of himself as part of a rational order of justice, in which each person receives his merited portions. Knowledge is no longer simply a tool for beating or humiliating his adversaries in heated verbal debate, but is information to be shared with others in the effort to arrive at a rational resolution of interpersonal conflicts.

Our conclusion is that Plato's Dialogues originated in

the physical struggle for power, which later became the re-viling-match. In the course of time, the raw passion for dominance became subject to guilt, internalized by the elders in the initiation procedures. In the philosophy of Plato, we find man in his full maturity; the guilt stemming from the awareness of his own *hubris* is transformed into an identification of the individual with the rational order of nature.

The hypothesis that the Dialogues of Plato originated in a religious ritual should come as no surprise to us, for the survival of ritual forms in drama and in literature is well known to scholars. Perhaps the most striking of such survivals is that of the Mithraic rituals in the Holy Grail stories. (26) Shakespearian tragedy, it has been suggested by G. Wilson Knight, is essentially a re-working of ancient fertility rituals, (27) and I have sought to show that Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* originated in early Greek religious ritual. (28)

The conclusions of this essay are consistent with the theories of Freud in *Totem and Tabu*, as elaborated by Theodore Reik in *The Puberty Rites of Savages*. Primitive Greek society consisted of patriarchal families or clans, and we may regard the prototype of the interpersonal conflict as the struggle between father and son for the possession of the mother-image. The fight for the kingship in its earliest form was the father-son conflict. With the ultimate waning of the father's powers, one of the sons would eventually kill the father, and would eat his body to attain magically his magical powers and strength. This cannibalistic feast later became the animal sacrifice. The puberty ritual arose as an instrument of the elders to rid the adolescents of their Oedipal desires before they became serious rivals.

The verbal contest has as its prototype the heated argument between father and son, which presumably often would culminate in physical violence. In the initiatory ordeal, the father seeks to expunge the son's incestuous desires; circumcision is the survival of an original castration. In the Platonic Dialogues, we have a typical conversation between father and son, priest and novice, master and pupil, or psychoanalyst

and analysand, in which the exchange of communication is basically an educational method for the purification of the individual of his drive for excessive power.

Following these hypotheses, we find in the comedy a survival, in the *agon*, of the physical struggle between father and son, followed by an animal sacrifice and the marriage to the mother goddess; this is precisely the sequence of events depicted by Freud in his theory of the "primal crime". In tragedy, according to Reik, there is a ritual re-enactment of the parricide at the time of the initiation ritual, with the intent of achieving a catharsis, or purification of the individual from his Oedipal desires.

Both Freud's and Reik's theories fail to take into account the role of the mother goddesses in religious cult and in initiation rituals. As the followers of Jung have emphasized, the dramatic representations at puberty rites often appear to express a rebirth of the individual from the mother, thereby expressing not only the novitiate's desire to return to the mother, but also his having outgrown such wishes by becoming an adult member of the community. This essay has been concerned largely with the tradition (or transference) of the father-son conflict into the intellectual discussion, but the influence of the mother-image must also be considered. Communication is itself perhaps based upon a mutual identification with a common mother (note the term "mother-tongue" as synonymous with a person's native language). The homosexuality occasionally found in the Platonic Dialogues should be considered in this connection. Intellectual dialectics is perhaps an expression of a mutual longing among the conversationalists to return to the mother. Suttie regarded group psychology, or herd phenomena, as based upon a mutual identification with a common mother, each member of the group representing, to some extent, the mother to each other person. Possibly the possession of a common language (the word "language" stems from "tongue") is to be traced back to a feeling of having suckled from a common breast, i.e., having identified with the same mother. Along these lines, we may conjecture that words

originated in auditory fetishes. In any event, numerous psychoanalytical writers have pointed out the connection between mystic philosophies and the longing for return to the mother.

Although compulsive elements are often to be found in ritual and myth, we must also regard religion as expressing, to some degree, man's striving for emotional and intellectual maturity. In particular, dramatic forms and literature, in their ritualistic and mythological origins, should be conceived as early philosophizing — reflection upon man, his problems, and his place in the cosmos. The ponderings on experience which we now perform internally were acted out by primitive man, and contained the germs of what was later to become lectures and books in the social sciences and in philosophy.

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The Type "Mr. Stuffed Shirt"

by

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A vile conceit in pompous words express'd,
Is like a clown in regal purple dress'd.

Alexander Pope, AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM

"Mr. Stuffed Shirt" is a recognizable type: he is pompous, stilted, cold, vain, measured in his expression. Frequently the meticulousness of his dress in comparatively informal surroundings makes other people uncomfortable; they retaliate by finding him ridiculous. Left to himself, the "stuffed shirt" has no inkling of the fact that he is one.

The iciness of his attitude is invariably fortified by the absence of any "sense of humor." He appreciates only the silly jokes he himself "makes," meaning: repeats. Since his pompous rendition always spoils the joke, he is the only one who laughs.

In an atmosphere of banter, teasing, witty innuendos, he is as helpless as a fish out of water. His revenge is the "killjoy" attitude. There is no denying that he is a thoroughly disagreeable fellow.

The first impression he makes is that of an insecure, rather depressed person, who "covers up" by putting on airs.

The next impression is that of a person prematurely calcified. "My husband was born dead," complained the wife of such a patient.

Still another impression then makes its way to the fore: the "stuffed shirt" seems to be enacting a comedy. "Such people do not really exist," is the reasoning, "the whole thing

* In his monumental work on quotations, Burton Stevenson informs us that this term was first used by Fay Templeton in attacking a "plunger named J. W. Gates about 1900." A contemporary poet, Delmore Schwartz, used it in rendering into English a passage from Arthur Rimbaud's UNE SAISON EN ENFER: "M. Proudhomme est né avec le Christ."

is some foolish playacting." A patient of this type once indignantly quoted to me Samuel Johnson's invective on Thomas Sheridan: "Why, Sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, Sir, is not in Nature."—"Am I stupid because I'm serious?" asked the patient.

Without clinical confirmation, all this leads nowhere.

In analyzing some of these "impossible people" (who of course come into analysis for reasons unconnected with this trait—generally because of depression, potency troubles, marital conflicts, etc.), one common denominator became evident. They all—unconsciously, to be sure—acted out *a caricature of a pompous educator, as the child perceived him*. The first impression the "stuffed shirt'" made, therefore, proved to be the correct one; "such people do not really exist" because the "stuffed shirt" is not copying a real person, but dramatizing a caricature.

Psychiatrically speaking, Mr. Stuffed Shirt is acting out a "negative magic gesture." Like its partner, the "positive magic gesture," this masochistic defense is a dramatized reproach against the cruel upbringers who allegedly denied him loving treatment in childhood. In the "positive magic gesture," the masochist plays the part of the parent as he or she should have been: loving and solicitous. In the "negative magic gesture," the masochist impersonates the "cruel" parent; the victim of the gesture (in the case of the "stuffed shirt," his whole environment) plays the role of his own mistreated self.

This also explains the "killjoy" attitude in these people. In a previous publication* I pointed out that the killjoy is popularly regarded as a person who gloats over the fact that he spoils other people's pleasure. Webster defines him as "a person of sullen disposition." Whether or not Webster is correct in judging that sullenness is the primary trait from which the killjoy's misanthropic conduct derives is of no im-

* "Psychology of the Killjoy," *The Medical Record*, 162:11-12, 1949.

portance to either the killjoy's circle or the killjoy himself. His environment willingly concedes that he is a sourpuss as well as a deliberate spoilsport; he himself denies that he is a killjoy at all. At most, he will admit that at times he is "depressed" and can't get "into the mood" of the rest of the company. What prevents him from seeing himself as he is?

The wife of one killjoy laid particular stress on his "ability to freeze people." He would do so either by maintaining a stony silence in a gay gathering, or by greeting every proposed plan of amusement with derogatory and biting remarks. If his wife reproached him, he would look at her in astonishment, and protest that he was being perfectly amiable.

A second aspect of the typicall killjoy attitude was described by the wife of another "sourpuss." Mrs. F. complained: "My husband knows only one form of conversation with people — to hear himself talk. Who can stand that? . . . Everyone wants to talk, and everyone resents having one person monopolize the floor. What makes it worse is that my husband is interested in just a few topics. For a long time it was impossible for me to convince him that he bores people, is intolerant and a killjoy. Finally he became cynical whenever we had these arguments, and now he quotes Disraeli: 'If I want to read a book, I write one.' He claims that he can endure people only on condition that he does all the talking."

These are the characteristics which make up the killjoy attitude:

1. The killjoy does not know he is a killjoy.
2. He does not have the amiable, semi-humorous approach to life which reflects the principle of "live and let live."
3. He is capable of biting irony, and uses it against people who are indulging in harmless gaiety.
4. The observer sees his character as that of a depressed person.
5. He seems to get some secret pleasure out of casting a pall on the enjoyment of others, either by pointing out the despicably low level of the fun they are having, or by making

it very evident that he does not find their jokes amusing.

6. He acts like a stern, disgusted governess watching the antics of a group of silly children.

These six descriptive signs correspond to a complicated unconscious substructure. In the deepest of these unconscious layers, the sight of other people amusing themselves unconsciously reminds the neurotic of real or fancied disappointments in infancy. These disappointments, he believes, were the fault of his upbringers, who forbade him "fun." The normal person would compensate in later life for these infantile frustrations; the neurotic repeats the disappointment. This masochistic move subsequently acquires the validity of an unconscious wish.

The inner conscience vetoes the psychic masochist's retreat to infantile disappointment, and the unconscious ego guiltily installs its first defense, pleading, "I don't want to be mistreated: I hate the people who disappointed me."

The inner conscience vetoes this defense as well, and the ego puts forward its substitute (and final) defense: "I want to show my upbringers how badly they treated me." This defense is dramatized in the killjoy's conduct; it is the "negative magic gesture."

This unconscious pattern of attack and defense explains the contradictions in the killjoy's behavior.

The killjoy does not see himself as he is because his aggression corresponds to his initial — rejected — defense. The killjoy wants to act aggressively, but he must disguise his aggression, because "hatred" has been forbidden by the inner conscience. Inwardly, he stresses that aggression, because it masks the more deeply repressed basic conflict, which is psychic masochism. Analytically, his aggression is defensive pseudo-aggression.

The killjoy cannot amiably tolerate other people's pleasure because his intrapsychic role is that of the stern and forbidding educator; sometimes this role is an imitation of the educator, and sometimes it is a caricature. The gloomier he is, the more bitter is his accusation against the parental image.

The killjoy's depression is also explained by his uncon-

scious defense: his external misery is essential to the plausibility of his inner alibi.

The killjoy is a specific type of neurotic; he is not born gloomy, but is made so by his neurosis. The process can therefore be therapeutically reversed.

What is the connection between the Stuffed Shirt and the Killjoy? Both types unconsciously elaborate on the same topic, using different points of attack. the former, *pompousness*, the latter, *malice* on the part of the educator, as the child perceived him. Frequently a combination of the two is encountered.

*

How do such people get wives? Their neurosis fits into the neurosis of the distaff members. Here is an example:^{*}

Mrs. D. was proud of her husband's "Foreign Office" reserve and reticence; she did not agree with the people who called him "cold and arrogant," although he was as cold in their private life as he was in public. What she did find irritating was a habit he had of smoothing back his hair. Her analysis began with complaints about this "irritating trifle"; subsequently she admitted that she was frigid, and had begun to wonder whether she was not wasting her life with this "Anthony-Eden type."

Mrs. D.'s background was lower middle-class, but with aspirations: her mother had implanted in her only child an admiration for distinguished aloofness. At one period, Mrs. D. had hated her mother and despised her father, who had been viewed by his wife as a "vulgar nonentity." Nevertheless, she fell into "bad company" during adolescence. Out of neurotic compensatory hatred of her mother, she even became the girl-friend of a semi-gangster for a few months. After an abortion, she became converted to her mother's point of view, and when she met her future husband, a man with a "stony face, a mouth chronically shut, and erect posture," she fell "madly in love with him." She never understood his

* Elaborated in CONFLICT IN MARRIAGE, pp. 43 ff., Harper, New York, 1949.

attraction for her.

Analysis showed that unconsciously Mrs. D. was pathologically attached to her mother. She was close to overt homosexuality; during her "gangster period" she had slept with two Lesbians. The homosexual attachment was typical of Lesbians: deeply repressed masochistic attachment to the mother; repressed pseudo-aggressive hatred as the rejected defense; a substitute defense of pseudo-love.

All Mrs. D.'s transgressions during her "gangster period" were futile attempts to escape her masochistic attachment via pseudo-aggression. The spiteful feeling she had for her mother was at last resolved by complete submission: she "fell in love" with a man who represented her mother's ideal. Her mother was enthusiastic about her daughter's choice. Unconsciously, Mrs. D.'s choice was a repressed complaint against her mother: "Look at the caricature you forced on me!"

Why had Mrs. D. been so irritated by her husband's habit of smoothing back his hair? When it was pointed out to her in analysis that her choice of a husband was inexplicable unless she understood her homosexual attachment to her mother, a repressed recollection came to the surface. Her mother used the identical gesture. Mrs. D. saw this gesture as the "incarnation of selfishness and exclusive self-love." That reproach was shifted to her rather stupid husband.

Her irritation with her husband's gesture was an unending inner reminder that she "loved" a person (her mother and later her husband) who was neurotically incapable of tenderness. It also reminded her of her masochistic attachment to her mother, and emphasized the fact that submission to her mother's point of view had not brought her *real* love. She warded off this painful realization with defensive fury.

*

Pope's impression of a "clown in regal purple" is correct — with one qualification: the inwardly satirized purple belongs to the educator; the clowning to the child.

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Hamlet's Parents: The Dynamic Formulation of A Tragedy

by

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and

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Dr. Ernest Jones in his monumental work, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, motivates Hamlet in terms of an unresolved Oedipal conflict, which provides the dynamic formulation for why Hamlet cannot kill Claudius: "his uncle incorporates the deepest and most buried part of his own personality, so that he cannot kill him without also killing himself." (6) Dr. Jones calls Hamlet's identification with Claudius "the jealous detestation of one evil-doer towards his successful fellow." (6) To the careful reader or perhaps even spectator of the play, this explanation of Hamlet's crucial motivation becomes finally unacceptable, not only because, as Dr. Harry Levin (8) points out, "Hamlet conceals his sympathy for his uncle more effectively than he conceals his hostility to, and from, Claudius," but also because if an unresolved Oedipal conflict is the crux of Hamlet's problem, then Shakespeare has given us, from beginning to end, an intensely neurotic, incapacitated tragic hero.

So, operating out of a different set of prejudices from those of Dr. Jones, we would look for signs of health and sanity in the tragic hero. Without wholly rejecting Dr. Jones's explanation, we can find them rather easily. Instead of assuming that Hamlet never came to Oedipal maturity, that his identification with his father was incomplete - which assumption, truly, cannot be supported textually - we consider him as having *regressed* to the period of Oedipal conflict under the stress of three awful shocks: his father's sud-

den death, his mother's hasty remarriage a month later to his uncle, and the Ghost's revelation of his father's foul murder.

If we consider the hero as regressed instead of arrested in development, then we can accept without question the Hamlet of the obviously jolly relationships with his school-fellows at Wittenberg (*Vide* I, ii, 160-175; II, ii, 226-241), the Hamlet who had been the paragon of Ophelia's dreams, "the glass of fashion, and the mould of form" (III, i, 161). Although we never do see a completely normal Hamlet on stage, we have very strong indications of the wonderfully energetic sensual and intellectual joy that the young Prince once found in life, a life in which the very air was a "most excellent canopy," in which "this brave o'erhanging firmament" was a "majestical roof fretted with golden fire," in which man was "the beauty of the world; the paragon of animals" (II, ii, 322-320). It is important to note that while in Hamlet's two major speeches before his meeting with the Ghost there is certainly depression, in the soliloquy the first hints of his reactivated Oedipal relation to his mother, there is nothing of the extreme life-denying quality of the second soliloquy, after the Ghost's revelation.

If Hamlet's relationship with his father had been conflicted, surely there would be indications of such in their meeting. Yet nothing in the Ghost scene (I, v) comes so clear as the harmonious relationship that had existed between father and son. The mature self-command with which Hamlet twice confronts the Ghost:

... . . . father . . . O answer me.

Let me not burst in ignorance . . .

(I, iv, 45-6.)

and

Speak, I'll go no further; (I, v, i)

the unconflicted simplicity of his response - "I will" - to his father's order, "Mark me"; his spontaneous pity, "Alas poor ghost!" the certain response the Ghost has every reason to expect to his rhetorical beginning, "If thou didst ever thy dear father love —"; the soul of devotion in Hamlet's interrupting exclamation, "O God!" his unthinking, whole-heart-

ed, instant support of his father, "that I . . ./ May sweep to my revenge"; his father's tender response to this filial devotion, "I find thee apt"; the solicitous attempt to warn his son of the danger in this ugly mission, "Taint not thy mind . . ."; and his last words, which must be the final wish of every fond parent, "Remember me"—all of these Mr. Granville-Barker (5) has described fully as "devoted surrender." I can find nothing in this scene but the non-dependent, supportive love of a mature young man for his father, and the admiration and respect of father for son.

For the Ghost's is not the speech of an overdirective, threatening father. The most psychologically insinuative line he speaks is "If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not" (I, v, 81), and the exhortation is merely rhetorical, for he has already found his son "apt", and he has come to him to set revenge in motion, not to chide him, as Hamlet thinks he does later.

The purpose of this later appearance of the Ghost in III, iv is a matter of some argument. The most important clue is that of the thirty-seven lines spoken between the Ghost's entrance and his exit, only six of them are spoken by the Ghost himself, all in one speech. It would seem, then, that what the Ghost has actually to say is meant to be less important than the effect of his appearance on Hamlet (Gertrude, of course, sees nothing). Indeed, that effect is noteworthy. The first line that Hamlet now addresses to his father is "Do you not come your tardy son to chide . . . ?" (III, iv, 106), the very vortex of the regression to the old castration fear.

The lines:

Do not look upon me
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects; then what I have to do
Will want true colour, tears perchance for blood,

(III, iv, 127-130)

are generally thought to be addressed by Hamlet to the Ghost, although critics have much trouble explaining their meaning. Mr. Dover Wilson (11), for instance, holds that it

is Gertrude on whom the Ghost first looks in supplication; then, as he realizes that adultery has cut her off from him forever, he turns his anguished face upon Hamlet. In the "bad" Quarto of 1603 the lines are part of a speech clearly addressed to the Ghost:

Doe you not come your tardy sonne to chide
...
O do not glare with lookes so pittifull!
Lest that my heart of stone yelde to compassion
And euerie part that should assist reuenge,
Forgoe their proper powers, and fall to pitty.

But by placing them in Q2 in a deliberately ambiguous position and adding Gertrude's puzzled question, "To whom do you speak this?" (III, iv, 131), Shakespeare seemed to intend both Gertrude and the audience to suspect that they may be addressed to her. The meaning of "tears perchance for blood" as addressed to Gertrude is as clear as that in *Coriolanus*, where the hero's stern effects are converted by his mother's piteous action. As addressed to the Ghost, these words strongly stress the fact that in Hamlet's regressed state the appearance of his father utterly castrates him.

Since the effect of this appearance of the Ghost contrasts so obviously with that of the first one, the one before the onset of regression, I see no room for doubt that the son who could, as a man, address his father with the strength in the line, "Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further" (I, iv, i) is no longer the same person whom his father's appearance in the mother's bedroom once again threatens with an old childhood fear.

The reader will ask now for the dynamic formulation of the regression. Why should Hamlet react to severe shock by regressing instead of by promptly murdering Claudius as his father suggests? The reason is that what the revelation of his father's murder really confirms to his "prophetic soul" are his suspicions about his mother's murderous role in marriage.

As early as 1896 Professor Boas (2) observed that Gertrude was incapable of a supportive maternal love. Because

of that the post-Oedipal Hamlet feels intense hostility toward her. Deprived suddenly of the father with whom he had identified, his hostility toward his mother takes the not uncommon form of his belief that, while Claudius effected the deed, it was his mother who essentially murdered his father. Hamlet, we have noted, is depressed even before the appearance of the Ghost. The Ghost's naming Claudius his murderer and his warning to Hamlet not to contrive against his mother frustrate the possible outlets for Hamlet's hostility toward her, depressing him even further.

Whether Gertrude was an accomplice in the actual deed is a question apart from that of the "essential murder." It is sometimes suggested that Shakespeare, by omitting from Q2 her definite denial of any knowledge of "this most horrid murder" meant that she was. But most critics agree with Dr. Bradley (3) that "the Queen was not a bad-hearted woman, not at all the woman to think little of murder." While hers is an undisciplined and insensibly destructive nature, it is not a criminal one. A matter of some argument too is the question of whether she had been adulterous. This also I find unlikely, not only because Gertrude is a simple woman who would suffer more than she does in countering the dictates of conventional morality, but also because the words of the Ghost imply a two-fold motive for Claudius: the Queen and the crown. King Hamlet was "at once deprived" of both; there is no indication that he had been deprived of his Queen by anything other than death.*

But the essential murder is something else again. Shakespeare might well have cut Gertrude's denial from Q2 because it is misleading in terms of the organic emphasis. That it was not she who procured the *hebona* and poured it into her husband's ear does not prove her essential innocence - not to Hamlet, not to the Ghost, who reveals his own ambi-

* Mr. Bertram Joseph (7) indicates that the Elizabethan use of the word *adulterate* (*Vide* I, v, 42) frequently referred to any sexual practice which was considered abnormal, including incest, of which Gertrude was considered guilty by marrying her brother-in-law.

valence when he urges his son, "But howsoever thou pursues this act,/ Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive/ Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven" (I, v, 85-87), nor should it to us. Even the most cursory reader or spectator of the play comes away with the distinct impression that Gertrude is terribly guilty - of something. Hamlet never doubts for a moment that his mother murdered his father. Claudius was only the effecting accident. That, while it is ugly enough, is not nearly so vile as a murder over the course of thirty years. But the Ghost, representing what Mr. Peter Alexander (1) calls the "wisdom of antiquity and her heroic passions," aims at the accident, the deed, while Hamlet, who is symbolic of "the meditative wisdom of later ages," is more concerned with the essence, the intent.

This thirty years "murder" does not necessarily indicate that there had been overt discord between man and wife. It is more likely that there had not been, since anger expressed is usually less dangerous than anger repressed. But that essential discord did exist can be shown in two major instances. The first is the product of it, Hamlet himself. We can only touch on him in hopes of pointing the way, suggesting, for instance, that his curious identification of Claudius as his mother ("father and mother is man and wife,/ man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother" IV, iii, 54-54) is an attempt to focus on the murderer as the Ghost directed. If Hamlet can think of Claudius as he thinks of Gertrude, then he can fuse accident and essence, thus satisfying both the Ghost and himself. And how else - unless one holds that Hamlet believes that his mother was an actual accomplice, which he has even less reason to believe than we, since he has not read Q1 - how else can one explain Hamlet's pointed accusation of Gertrude: "almost as bad, good mother,/ As kill a king and marry with his brother" (III, iv, 27-28); or his half hope, half fear that she will "break it" - her mask of innocence or, worse, indifference - under the "wormwood" of the line, "None wed the second, but who killed the first" (III, ii, 190).

The second place to look for indications of discord is, of course, in the speeches of the Ghost himself. Claudius, he

tells us, is quite the mighty opposite of himself. The elder Hamlet's love for his wife was as dignified as the very marriage vows; Claudius' love is lustful and lewd. The elder Hamlet was well-endowed with "natural gifts." Claudius, evidently, is also a handsome man, but his "gifts" are "traitorous" (I, v, 43). The elder Hamlet won his Queen by a formal contract; Claudius won her by the "witchcraft of his wits." Doubtlessly, Gertrude, a childish, bovine, psychologically dependent, sensually playful little woman, a "sweet Queen" if not a very effectual one, has found a mate much better suited to her in her second husband than in her first. "Her shallow capacity," as Professor Boas (2) commented, "probably found in the adroit, obsequious intriguer more 'warmth and colour' than in the heroic form. . . ." King Hamlet had been nothing if not chaste, proper, and terribly dignified. (In addition to describing his love in that term, in Q1 he bemoans the loss not only of his life, his Queen, and his crown, but of his "dignitie" as well.) Mr. D. A. Traversi (10) suggests one source, perhaps the most important, of the parental conflict when he says, "His father's love for his mother had, as their son now recalls it, a precarious artificial quality, as though its object needed to be protected from physical contact. . . ."

Furthermore, Gertrude is not very intellectually acute. Dr. Bradley (3) describes her as a sheep in the sun; "she had a soft animal nature, and was very dull and very shallow." The witchcraft of his wits that Claudius exercised on her, since we hear no evidence in his speeches that he is a verbally clever man, was probably no more than a series of farmer's-daughter jokes. But the speech of the elder Hamlet, like that of his son, is full of the sensitive diction of an observant man. I refer specifically to his clinical description of the effects of the poison and to his wonderfully responsive lines:

The glowworm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire (I, v, 89-90.)

Imagine his speaking so to Gertrude! It is difficult to see

how there could have been anything but essentially disharmony between these two.*

Finally, such compulsively forced signs of affection as her hanging on her first husband "as if increase of appetite had grown/ By what it fed on" (I, ii, 43-44) and her conventional histrionics at his funeral are affectations which her son recalls with bitterness and sarcasm because he, as must we, knows them for the play-acting forms they are.

It is Gertrude's obvious happiness with his younger brother that the Ghost cannot bear, for he would never and never did elicit such ebullience from her by loving her in dignity. And that failure, as D. H. Lawrence devoted his career to pointing out, is the final one. That wound is the deepest. It infects life at its very source. It kills.

Such misery in human relations exists, and there is very little point in whose fault it is. Indeed, Miss Caroline Spurgeon (9) concludes that Shakespeare saw the problem in *Hamlet* ". . . as a condition for which the individual himself is apparently not responsible . . ." The Ghost, qua ghost, would forgive Gertrude this essential death, nor would he grudge her her happiness, qua happiness. But he will burst his cerements, force open the marble jaws of his sepulchre to howl revenge against Claudius.

All of this Hamlet could not help but be aware of. No child is unaware of the tensions and conflicts between his parents. And it is an everyday commonness that the death, especially the sudden death, of the parent with whom the child was identified is often interpreted by the child as a mur-

* Cf. *Saxo-Grammaticus* in Israel Gollanex (4): "Gerutha, said he, though so gentle that she would do no man the slightest hurt, had been visited with her husband's extremest hate; and it was all to save her that he had slain his brother; for he thought it shameful that a lady so meek . . . should suffer the heavy disdain of her husband." Although Feng's deliberate lie proves nothing conclusively even in the old legend itself, it is, nonetheless, significant that Feng should choose *this* lie.

der by the surviving parent toward whom he has long felt hostility.

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Cooper, Freud and The Origins of Culture

by

William Wasserstrom

We know now that we have inherited, from earlier generations of critics, a legacy of confused opinion on James Fenimore Cooper. And today we undertake to describe his accomplishment in those areas of thought where his genius most fully presents itself, in the realm of fable and legend. For we realize that Cooper, assuming the role of myth-maker, was nearly as inventive as the Indians and frontiersmen whom he prized, as quick as they to infer a thing in the thicket from the lightest quiver of a twig. The work in which his special gifts are most fully exploited is *The Prairie*, his own favorite fiction in the Natty Bumppo series, and the only one of his novels which is both programmatic and emblematic but not a tract or an allegory. It is also the sole work in which his ideas are argued by characters whose lives are buttressed by an accurate psychology. And though the novel is nowadays much analyzed, no one has recognized that its peculiar strength is rooted in what we must call a striking achievement of Cooper's unconscious imagination. Even D. H. Lawrence, who was first to notice that *The Prairie* is a "strange, splendid book," full of the "shadow of violence and dark cruelty," was unable to say exactly why it filled him with "the sense of doom." Lawrence sensed that this novel, at its core, harbored "the aboriginal demon." (1) But he did not realize that Cooper's demon was the same one that pre-occupied Freud and was described first in *Totem and Taboo*

1. D. H. Lawrence, "Studies in Classic American Literature," *The Shock of Recognition*, ed. by Edmund Wilson, (New York, 1943), pp. 959-960.

and then in that vexing book, *Moses and Monotheism*. (2)

At first gasp this does indeed seem an odd, even factitious, notion — Cooper and Freud under a common yoke. And though they do make an extraordinary pair, the two men did in fact share certain traditions and aims. The issue examined in Freud's essays did not after all concern theory or therapy but applied some implications of these to still larger matters — to the problem of reconstructing those events which underlay the creation of social order during a remote time in the history of man. In that day men lived dangerous but more or less untrammeled lives which, later, they exchanged for safer and more orderly forms. Anarchic freedom, however inspiring in some ways, provided little protection against all the forces of destruction which, in fantasy and in fact, men saw threatening them. Cooper, too, admired the frontiersman's freedom but recognized some limitations, foresaw its inhibition by the unremitting forces of civilization. And both men were saddened by the very high price men are forced to pay for the comforts and solace of culture. Freud is after all the apogee of all the natural philosophers who flourished during the Enlightenment. And Cooper, who came to maturity under its guidance, would have had no difficulty understanding either Freud's vocabulary or his explanation of the way union developed among primitive men as a "sort of social contract" which established an organization based on "a renunciation of instinctual gratification . . ." Both men participated in a tradition of thought which claims that the discontents of civilization occur because culture defiles or distorts human nature.

At a still deeper level of communion, each would have respected the other's reliance on a unique theory of evolution, the phylogenetic. Freud required this principle, "phylogenetic inheritance," in order to explain the recurrence of

2. Ernest Jones describes the annoyance and perplexity it has caused: see *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, III, (New York, 1957). Cf. Sandor S. Feldman, "Notes on the 'Primal Horde,'" *Psycho-analysis and the Social Sciences*, I, (New York, 1947), pp. 171-193.

certain phenomena within man's unconscious life. He argued — against the opinion of colleagues — that "the mental residue" of primeval times is "a heritage which, with each new generation, needs only to be reawakened." (3) Then men recall ancient, barbarous crimes and feel anew a sense of guilt. Cooper borrowed, from the French Encyclopedists, from Condorcet, an early version of the same principle and applied it not to man's unconscious life but to the life of society. According to its description of social evolution, all human societies pass through a series of fixed stages, "from that of the hunter in the forest through the 'patriarchal' stage of migratory pastoral tribes . . . and so on through ever more complex and stable forms of government . . ." (4) This is the theory Cooper incorporated in *The Prairie* where "the march of civilization" is located at "those distant and ever-receding borders which mark the skirts and announce the approach of the nation . . ." (5) In the course of its development, Cooper believed, American civilization was to pass through all the classic stages of culture, much as ontogeny was thought to recapitulate phylogeny. He was convinced, therefore, that social conditions on the frontier recalled a situation "as near barbarity" as that under which men lived in the prehistoric past. And in order to portray the conditions of the patriarchal stage, he created the tribe of Ishmael Bush.

It is at this point that a casual interplay of the intelligence — a mere circumstance of history, notable because two men of vastly different times and places see eye to eye — at this point, interplay is not casual but turns schematic. Freud

3. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York, 1955), pp. 104, 170.
4. Henry Nash Smith, Introd., *The Prairie: a Tale* (New York, 1950), p. xiii.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 69. These ideas compose a form of environmentalism which, as applied to American life, underlay Condorcet's *Influence of the American Revolution on Europe* (1786). Cf. V. L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, II, (New York, 1930), pp. 10-11, 231.

drew on information available in biblical, biological, archeological and anthropological studies, then composed a hypothesis which described how men originally lived in a primal horde itself disciplined by a severely patriarchal code. And Cooper removed the Bush family from settlements to prairie, to that remote frontier where he hoped to represent the stages and to penetrate the mystery of culture. There alone, he remarked in an essay on American literature — written one year after *The Prairie* appeared — an American writer could find “subjects . . . to be treated with the freedom that the imagination absolutely requires.” (6) Unfolding this theme — which Henry Bamford Parkes calls an expression of “the embryonic beginnings, in patriarchal form, of organized law and order” (7) — reproducing the experience of this tribe, undertaking to define what deep impulse and dark desire underlay the creation of social order, Cooper allowed his imagination to range. And he conceived what Freud was to call the most barbarous of all acts, the mythic primal crime.

II

We meet the Bush clan at the moment when the novel opens and immediately we realize that its experience signifies the central matter of the fiction as a whole. Ordinarily, this fact is overlooked. The Trapper is regarded as the novel’s main personage and — so Richard Chase and Marius Bewley contend — the special quality of his beautiful human nature its principal subject. The Trapper, however, dies in a work originally designed less to lament his passing than to intimate what must succeed him in the wilderness. We do indeed suffer a loss. But Cooper reminds us that the march of civilization is ceaseless and after all does confer some advantages. A community of honest men, purged of evil, vitalized as a result of exposure to the teachings of the Trapper, to nature’s

6. James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans*, II, (Philadelphia, 1828), p. 112.

7. Henry Bamford Parkes, “Metamorphosis of Leatherstocking,” *Literature in America*, ed. Philip Rahv, (New York, 1957), p. 434.

own agriculture of the spirit — this community might well establish on the American continent a new Eden.

What the tribe does, therefore, is crucial; what each of its chief persons learns about himself, about the others, about property and passion and honor; Indians, the Old Trapper, the prairie, Mother Nature — all this informs its body and members and will inform the still larger community of American in later and higher stages of culture. Its leader, Ishmael, is a figure of legend, a man of "vast and . . . prodigious power" who marched "at some distance in front of the whole," followed by "a group of youths very similarly attired, and bearing sufficient resemblance to each other, and to their leader, to distinguish them as the children of one family." Thus Cooper presents the tribal horde. In his mind, as in Freud's, it is a self-contained and self-supporting unit ruled by the father. It is composed of seven sons and numberless daughters; Ishmael's wife, Esther; his brother-in-law, Abiram; his wife's orphaned niece, Ellen "including both sexes and every age, the number of the party exceeded twenty." (8) There are two outsiders, both of whom are included in order that the various segments of Cooper's program may be represented. The scientist, Dr. Bat, is a man whose natural intelligence has been corrupted by cyclopedic but inapt learning. And Inez embodies the highest achievement of an old and supremely refined aristocracy — Creole New Orleans'. Her marriage with a natural nobleman, Duncan Uncas Middleton, represents an amalgam of old and new, a blend of the best virtues in each.

These persons perform certain obvious tasks within the formal plot. Inez' abduction by Bush and his brother-in-law, for example, expresses their lawlessness, their disavowal of the usual rules of conduct and of property. It is a lawlessness which Cooper believed must be overcome else none of the members of the clan will be properly equipped to assume their high duties — to compose what Whitman was to call the great national *en masse*. Of course the abduction

8. *The Prairie*, pp. 4-5.

is also a prototype of the chase required in all westerns, and, as is well known, allows Cooper to show off his Indians, his buffalo and the rest. What is considerably less familiar and far more subtle is the way Inez links all elements of plot.

Quite as the experience of the Bush family provides the center of interest in the novel as a whole, so Inez' situation helps to clarify certain telling events within the inner life of the tribe itself. In "a weak moment," urged by Abiram White, the Patriarch had kidnapped this woman and brought her into his "peaceable and well-governed family." Ostensibly, his aim was to receive high ransom for her return. Actually, the abduction serves another purpose. It enables Cooper to portray a clash between generations, a rebellion of the sons against the father. For Ishmael, "grave in exterior, saturnine by temperament, formidable in his physical means, and dangerous from his lawless obstinacy," wields what Cooper calls a peculiar "species of patriarchal power." And this power is threatened when his eldest son, Asa, revolts.

The revolt develops when Ellen disobeys Ishmael's order to stay away from the secret place where Inez is hidden. Shamed by his evil deed, fearful that the rest of the family will discover his guilt, Ishmael had hidden her in a wagon "covered with a top of cloth so tightly drawn as to conceal its contents with the nicest care." The others are told that the wagon holds a dangerous beast brought by Abiram out into the wilderness to serve as a decoy should they be forced to use that device. Ellen disregards the standing order to remain far from Inez' hiding place. Ishmael commands her not to open the flap, but she is less docile than Ishmael's own children and she disobeys. He fires his rifle; she shrieks and disappears inside. It is this act which precipitates the quarrels that follow — between son and uncle, between uncle and father, between sons and father.

For the first time in their lives, Ishmael's sons are outraged by a display of their father's autocratic rule. They "manifested, in an unequivocal manner, the temper with which they witnessed the desperate measure. Angry, fierce glances were interchanged, and a murmur of disapprobation

was uttered by the whole in common." Their response is extraordinary, Cooper says, and cannot be attributed to sudden gallantry. It is at this point, then, that Cooper introduced the Freudian matter. Asa, the eldest son, speaks for the others:

"What has Ellen done, father," said Asa, with a degree of spirit which was the more striking from being unusual . . . "Mischief . . . boy; mischief! Take heed that the disorder don't spread."

Keep your place, Asa, Ishmael answers, and control your brothers. But Asa is enraged, disdainful; he forgets his first purpose, to defend Ellen, and seems to want to provoke a battle, man to man. Ishmael senses his mood and reminds him, "I am your father, and your better." "I know it well; and what sort of father?" Ishmael again warns that disobedience will bring severe punishment. But Asa is beyond intimidation. He is ready to provoke a crisis in the rule of the tribe because he has arrived at a critical moment in his own life. He is no longer willing to remain inside the "web of authority within which Ishmael had been able to envelope his children." Ellen is forgotten. And we realize that the scene is composed less to portray a debate on the propriety of firing bullets at young women than to represent the psychology and consequence of rebellion, during the patriarchal stage of civilization, within the tribal horde. In the final exchange between the two men, therefore, we see how far behind they have left its original cause. "I'll stay no longer," Asa says, "to be hectored like a child in petticoats. You . . . keep me down as though I had not life and wants of my own." (9) And there we have Asa's main grievance: he is ready to risk his father's wrath in contention over the only nubile women available in their private world.

Asa's ripening adulthood, his assertion of sexual needs no less valid than his father's, are symbolized in the very next occurrence. Inez materializes and stands at some distance from the assembled company. Seeing her, Asa turns to his

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

uncle and remarks, "this then is the beast . . . I had known you to be . . . a dealer in black flesh," but not till now had he realized that "you drove the trade into white families" too. Abiram answers, "look to your own family"; that Ishmael and the sons are not renowned for their honesty. And Asa's accumulated fury is loosed. He hits Abiram "a back-handed but violent blow on the mouth that caused him to totter . . ." (10) It is a fateful act, directed against a surrogate but in fact meant for the father himself, as everyone but Abiram is aware. And because Ellen's disobedience and Asa's blow are traceable to Inez' presence, we realize that this genteel lady of high station and Roman Catholic breeding is, in quite another sense than the irony reports, indeed a "ravenous, dangerous beast."

Inez is a fragile woman of iron virtue but her "sylph-like form," which Cooper calls the "beau ideal of female loveliness," is lush: "long, flowing and curling tresses of hair, still blacker and more shining than her robe, fell at times about her shoulders, completely enveloping the whole of her delicate bust in ringlets . . ." (11) Seeing this vision, all the men are stirred. The young Pawnee chief, noblest of savages, "riveted his eyes on Inez" and immediately his head is turned. "He had the air of one who maintained a warm struggle . . . in the recesses of his own thoughts." Even his sense of direction is lost. Although he is absolutely at home on the prairie, his return to his village is delayed when, setting off, "he rode for a moment . . . in circles, as if uncertain of his course." Middleton, a gentleman, is no less moved but is better at disguising his passion. Indeed, we do no violence to the text if we read the novel as a kind of teaser in which this young man chases his lady all over the prairie in order to get her back where she belongs: in bed. For Ishmael and Abiram had kidnapped Inez as she returned home from her prayers, during the short time between her wedding and its consummation. She had disappeared while

10. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Middleton — “the lover, the husband, the bridegroom” — impatiently waited.

Asa’s accusation is wrong — neither Abiram nor Ishmael had planned to sell her into sexual bondage — but his error is consistent with his mood. And his mood is provoked by the odor of passion which Inez exudes. She is a genteel female of Cooper’s usual sort and, simultaneously, she is a woman of peculiar erotic power. She is therefore ideally suited to play the role Cooper reserved for her, to take her place at the center of a plot encircled by crimes of passion. When Cooper removed Inez from the darkness of her prison-tent and, at a critical moment in the argument between Ishmael and Asa, placed her high on a windy hill, dress fluttering “like gossamer around her form” — in this image we recognize his way of exposing to the light of day what it is that animates Asa’s rebellion. The young man is ready to assume the responsibilities and enjoy the prerequisites of adult manhood. And these are unavailable so long as Ellen Wade, who provokes the crisis, and Inez, who symbolizes its essential meaning, are held within his father’s heavy hand. In the instant before he hits Abiram, Asa has two choices: he can somehow overmaster his father and put himself in the older man’s place; or he can leave. Before Inez’ appearance he had threatened to leave, and with deadly playfulness his father had replied, “the world is wide, my gallant boy . . . Go . . .” When he strikes the blow, however, we understand that he has undertaken to follow the first course. We realize, too, that Cooper has conceived what Freud later was to call a version of the oedipal dream and that this will now be enacted, ritualistically, to its inexorable close.

It is unnecessary to reconstruct the whole of Freud’s argument. We require merely its substance and this is given in a succinct passage where Freud maintained that “all primordial men, including, therefore, our ancestors,” underwent the fate which Cooper’s fiction unfolds. The parallel is not merely striking; it is extraordinary. “The strong male was the master and father of the whole horde, unlimited in his power, which he used brutally. All the females were his

property, the wives and daughters of his own horde as well as perhaps also those stolen from other hordes. The fate of the sons was a hard one; if they excited the father's jealousy they were killed or castrated or driven out." There is an echo of the "expulsion of the eldest son," Freud observed, "in many myths and fairy-tales."¹² (12) Its echo in *The Prairie* is quiet, however, because Cooper decided on one of the alternate choices. When Asa refuses his father's invitation to leave and instead commits an act which threatens the Patriarch's rule, he is exposed, vulnerable. And his hopes for survival—in a story which recapitulates what Freud called the myth of the tribal horde—are modest indeed.

Abiram kills Asa, in hate, revenging himself for the insult. Cooper's readers long have accepted this as a valid motive because Abiram is a demonstably vicious man. But they have accepted it on less persuasive grounds too. Cooper is a notoriously careless writer, quick to sacrifice the world of fact in favor of the larger universe of fancy. Comprehending the essence of an idea or an experience, he was impatient or neglectful when he set out to describe its surface. In this instance, Asa's death at Abiram's hand is true to the spirit of the whole situation but inappropriate, unbelievable when presented as a result of the sheer incident, the mere insult, alone.

The essential reasons for murder transpire once we realize that Abiram has a dual role even in the explicit plot. He serves as Ishmael's evil genius, a tempter whose "vice is like a raven in my ears," and simultaneously he serves as the instrument of Ishmael's will. Murdering Asa, he accomplishes Ishmael's design: it is Abiram's gun that shoots but it is Ishmael's bullet that kills the son. This is not Cooper's figure of speech but one evoked by Ishmael's ruminations in the scene where Asa's body is discovered and buried. Ishmael tries to dissociate himself from the crime but he shares the murderer's guilt if only because he feels relieved to learn that his eldest son is dead. Asa had not followed his father's

12. *Moses and Monotheism*, pp. 102-103.

command to keep the disorder from spreading; on the contrary, "the spirit of insubordination, which emanated from the unfortunate Asa, had spread among his juniors" and had threatened the father's rule. Freud would have said that it threatened the father's life — that one of the sons sooner or later would have murdered Ishmael. That Cooper shared this opinion too is indicated by Ishmael's recollection of his own past, of the time when "in the wantonness of his youth and vigor, he had . . . cast off his own aged and failing parents, to enter into the world unshackled and free." The fear of being similarly cast off — killed — crosses Ishmael's mind but is immediately replaced by a more comforting thought. With Asa's death, "the danger had abated, for a time at least": that is to say, until the time when another son grew rebellious. And he is pleased, thinking that although "his authority was not restored with all its former influence," nevertheless, it maintained "its ascendancy a little longer." (13)

In order to underscore Ishmael's sense of his own danger, of temporary reprieve, Cooper diverts our attention to the private thoughts of the mother and the remaining sons. And we learn that the latter "had glimmerings of terrible distrust as to the manner in which their elder brother had met his death." These glimmerings are the more remarkable, Cooper observes, because usually the young men are dull. Even their mother, a most loyal wife, suspects her husband, as Ishmael later remarks. Neither mother nor sons have as yet any reason to accuse Ishmael, not the last clue confirming his guilt or innocence. Nevertheless, each of the sons fears for his life. Their thick minds grow suddenly supple, prescient, and they wonder if Ishmael is ready to "imitate the example of Abraham, without the justification of the sacred authority which commanded the holy man to attempt the revolting office." (14) Invoking the biblical story, Cooper causes the figures of Abiram — Abraham — and Ishmael to

14. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

13. *The Prairie*, pp. 162-163.

merge and become one. The horde of restless sons recognizes in this person an absolute ruler who killed their brother though he had no sanction higher than that dictated by his own nature and by his tribal rank; who is ready to deal with each of them in a similar way. And, Cooper observes, the main result of this awareness is "to strengthen . . . the authority of Ishmael." His reign is assured because he, the man whose own rebellion had succeeded, has overridden the challenge of his eldest son. Primal justice has triumphed and a primitive culture, having suffered neither social revolution nor anarchy, has survived.

III

It is this note that closes two extraordinary scenes which accord, in outline and in detail, with those described in the Freudian hypothesis. "The story is told in a very condensed way," Freud said, "as if what in reality took centuries to achieve . . . had happened only once." The remark of course describes Cooper's method too. And a story with which Cooper initially hoped to symbolize primeval experience in the life of the nation came somehow to comprehend what Freud later was to call the paradigm of man's racial experience.

But we have not even yet fully described Cooper's anticipation and application of these intricate ideas. Freud contended that the desire to kill a tribal leader — fulfilled in the case of Moses or forestalled as in the case of Ishmael — is itself the source of the idea of original sin. And this idea, in turn, distinguishes Hebrew from Christian organization. "Paul, a Roman Jew from Tarsus, seized on this feeling of guilt and correctly traced it back to its primeval source. . . It was a crime against God that could be expiated only through death." (15) This is Ishmael's opinion too when, late in the novel, he does finally recognize an authority higher than his own. "Abiram White," he says, pronouncing sentence, "you have slain my first born and according to the laws of God and man you must die." (16) The Patriarch is no longer a Hebrew nomad chieftain and instead speaks as a Christian

who has received God's Word and knows what he must do in order to gain salvation. With his wife's help he searches the Bible to find those "rules of conduct which have been received among all Christian nations as the direct mandates of the Creator." (17) Asa's murder, a crime committed without God's sanction, had abrogated God's law. Originally, the crime had pleased Ishmael but now he regards it as the work of "the devil incarnate," inflicted as a "terrible retribution from Heaven." If he is to be purged of guilt, he himself must suffer, must somehow die. His method is to sentence Abiram, the actual criminal, to death. Thereby he hopes to atone for his own share in the crime. Abiram, therefore, who appeared "to totter beneath a load of . . . guilt," has every reason to stumble as he moves toward his "last agony." For he bears not his own guilt alone but Ishmael's too.

In the moments just before Abiram's death, Cooper reveals how, in the recesses of his imagination, the two men share one soul and a common fate. Ishmael, feeling as if he "had been suddenly and violently separated from a recent confederate forever," leaves Abiram to hang himself. We realize that this unaccustomed emotion does not represent a sudden affection for his brother-in-law. Rather, Ishmael feels that he is about to be rid of nothing less than his own concupiscence, malice, envy. This is why, in the next instant, Abiram's death cry "seemed to have been uttered at the very portals of [Ishmael's] . . . ears." Suddenly, feeling his own blood gush "from every pore in his body," he is amazed to hear "a sort of echo first . . . from his own lips . . ." (18) Having offered in sacrifice that part of himself, as we may say, which is guilty, Ishmael announces his own guilt, participates in Abiram's agony, achieves expiation and is reborn.

In these transmutations of plot, therefore, we recognize a transformation of its religious tone. What Freud would have

15. *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 109.

16. *The Prairie*, p. 420.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 418-419.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 424-425.

called the Mosaic order has been replaced by "the new religion founded by Paul," based on the twin principles of "original sin and salvation through sacrificial death." In the action of Cooper's novel, transformation occurs when the remaining members of the family depart from the primitive West and return to "the confines of society," where their "train was blended among a thousand others" and where their descendants — good Christians all — are forever "reclaimed from . . . lawless and semi-barbarous lives. . . ."

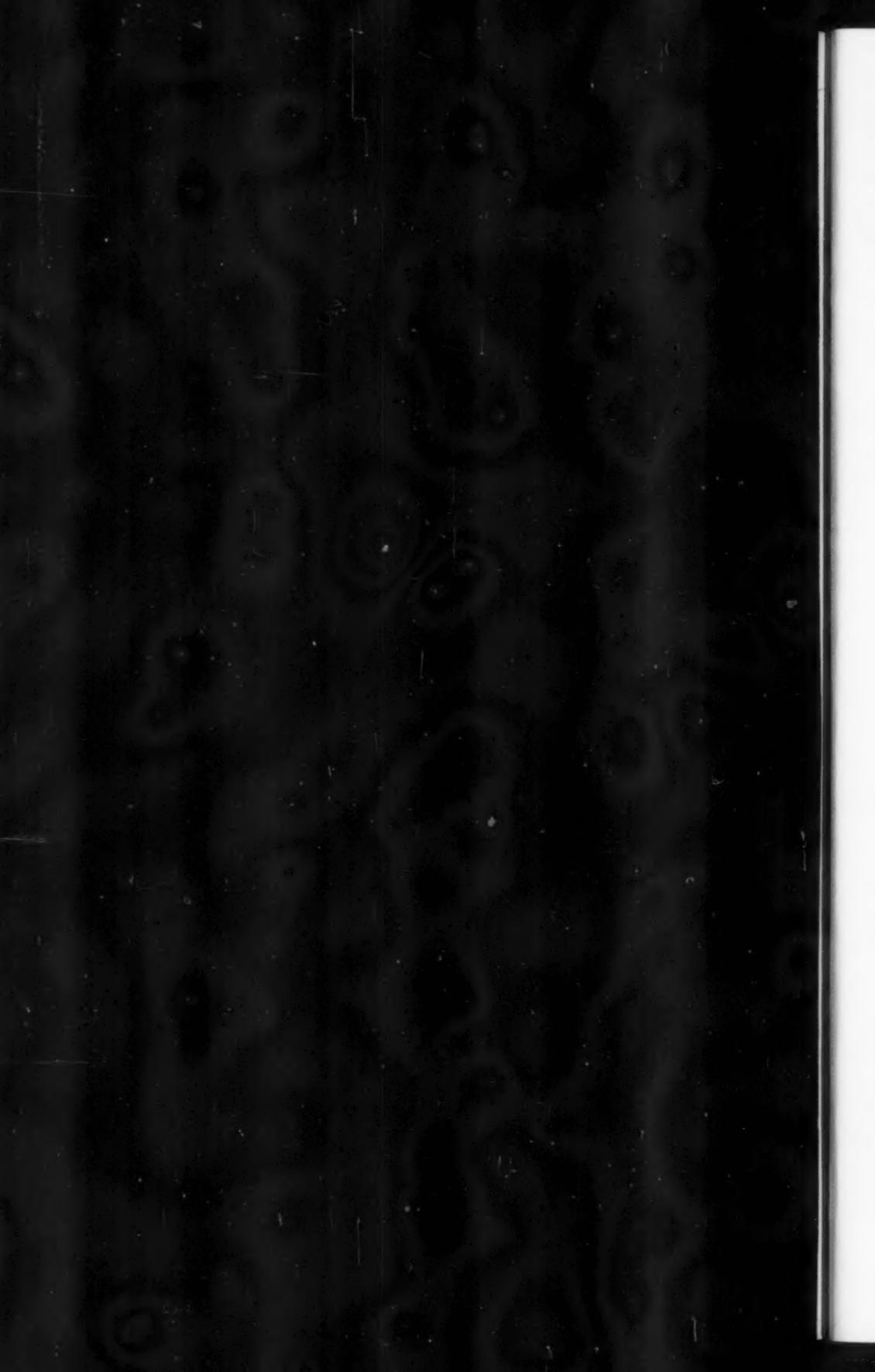
I have not undertaken merely to say that Cooper, a writer who combined crudity and cunning, must be included in the list of artists — Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoevski — who long before Freud discovered the unconscious. Amplification alone, at this stage of thought, has small value. Nor does the Freudian concept itself any longer require data of this sort as attestation of its worth or its influence. My essay does treat, however, the precise matter of the tribal horde and the primal crime, the specific argument presented in *The Future of an Illusion*, in the last major work of Freud's career, *Moses and Monotheism*. And this argument, which concerns the origins of culture and of religion, remains even now, as most psychologists, sociologists and theologians agree, sheer speculation — suggestive but unsound. (19) It is therefore striking indeed to find in Cooper's novel the kind of attestation Freud required but, despite lifelong and comprehensive research, never educed.

However accurate or inaccurate his theory of culture may be, its substance does help to enlarge our response to and respect for this novel. Like Freud, Cooper hoped to recreate the beginning of human society. Unlike Freud, he identified its origins with the earliest stages of American civilization. Interlocking these, he introduced the traditional matter of the American dream and thereby fulfilled his mission as a novelist.

19. Lillian B. McCall, a disciple of the anthropologist, Kroeber, recently lamented that Freud's "fairy tale" is again to be treated with respect. "Freud and Scientific Truth," *Commentary*, XXV (April, 1958), p. 348.

ist of the new kind, an American novelist who assisted at the birth of the Nation and who served it by portraying how it might, once purified, lead the way for all mankind. All this he incorporated in a line of action that involved the public and the private life of a single family. For Cooper, like Freud, realized that the forces which animate a tribe of this kind are the same forces which, once harnessed will compel men and nations to fulfill their highest destiny.

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